

D. H. Lawrence's Australia:  
Degeneration and Regeneration at the Edge of Empire

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of  
The Australian National University

June 2009

I, David Russell Game, hereby declare that, except where otherwise indicated in the customary manner, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this work is my own, and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other university or institution.

.....*David Game*..... June 2009  
David Game





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Livio Dobrez, my first supervisor, for his faith in my project, and for his critical commentaries. I thank Ian Higgins, who introduced me to ideas of degeneration, and who graciously agreed to supervise me over the final twelve months or so. I would like to thank my early panel members, Rich Pascal for his comments on some early drafts, and Rosemary Campbell for early encouragement. I also thank the late Axel Clark, Graham Cullum, Pat Dobrez, Simon Haines, Jacquie Lo, Gillian Russell, and the late Iain Wright, who all provided inspiration. I also thank Raewyn Arthur, Margaret Brown, and Judi Crane in the office at the School of Humanities for their support, and the continuing provision of a bolt-hole. I would like to thank those many members of the British, American, Japanese and Korean societies dedicated to the study of D. H. Lawrence who provided encouragement and friendship. I am particularly grateful to, Elizabeth Fox, Andrew Harrison, Bethan Jones, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Carl Krockel, Sean Matthews, Maria Ollivere, Nancy L. Paxton, Christopher Pollnitz, Peter Preston, Jung-Min Woo and John Worthen for our conversations at Lawrence conferences. I thank my wife, Jenny Gall, particularly for the hours we have spent discussing our projects, my children William, Claire, Helena and Jeremy for their interest and encouragement, and my parents Michael and Elizabeth Game for their support and encouragement. I thank Marina Lewis and Neil Longmore for their friendship, stimulus and encouragement over many years. Thanks to Sue Clarke for our many coffees and discussions about our projects. Thanks to Karen Westlake for her enlightened weekly yoga classes. I thank Geoffrey Potter for his enduring friendship and his many wise words, and Dick Thompson for our long friendship and his gift of the *Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*. I thank Jo Major, Suzi Hewlett and Ric Howard who facilitated my flexible working arrangements at the Department of Education, Science and Training. I thank Julie Yeend, Kerryn Peisley, Sally-Ann Thomas, Rhonda Peterson and Shirley Cunningham, my colleagues at the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, for their interest during the final stage of my project. I also acknowledge the funding assistance from the Australian Government provided through an Australian Postgraduate Award.

To my parents

Michael and Elizabeth Game



## ABSTRACT

D. H. Lawrence studies is currently limited by a general assumption that Lawrence's literary engagement with Australia begins with *Kangaroo* (1923) and ends with *The Boy in The Bush* (1924), and that his interest in Australia is confined to his visit of some three months between 4 May and 11 August 1922. Lawrence's time in Australia is often characterised as merely incidental to his subsequent journey to America, with the result that attention to Lawrence's engagement with Australia has been distracted by his later experience of two other new world societies – the United States and Mexico. The consequence is a diminished understanding of the importance of Australia in Lawrence's *oeuvre*, and its significance in his quest for a way of life which would enable regeneration of the individual, in the face of what he saw as the moral collapse of modern industrial civilisation after the outbreak of World War I.

This study, the first to attempt an analysis of all of D. H. Lawrence's literary works as well as his other writings about Australia, has two objectives. The first and overarching objective is to extend our understanding of the significance of Australia in Lawrence's work and his life. The second objective is to show that Lawrence's conflicted and contradictory visions of Australia, both fictional and non-fictional, must be linked as much to his absorption and re-working of received theories of moral and social degeneration, which arose after the emergence of Darwinism in the late nineteenth century, as to his actual experience of Australia and Australians. Like many modernists, Lawrence was disillusioned with contemporary industrial society and articulated many of the concerns, and adopted much of the imagery of degeneration theorists. Rather than advocating political, social and economic remedies, Lawrence saw regeneration of the individual, and his or her immediate relationships, as the starting point for broader societal solutions. For much of his adult life he maintained a desire for a small utopian and regenerative community, "Rananim," and his visions of Australia, and his brief residence here, are important expressions of this quest, and its associated frustrations. Lawrence's engagement with Australia is also informed and mediated by a plethora of images derived from literature, anthropology, and his interactions with Australians, as well as a range of discourses which underpinned Britain's sense of itself as the centre of a vast global empire, including those associated with migration, gender, race relations, and colonialism.

Lawrence's Australia is diverse – remote, marginalised, and uncivilised in “The Vicar's Garden” (2009), written 1907, and *The White Peacock* (1911), modern and degenerate in “The Primrose Path” (1922), written 1913, modern and promising in *The Lost Girl* (1920) and *Aaron's Rod* (1922), modern and degenerate in *Kangaroo* (1923), and modern and invasive in *St. Mawr* (1925). In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Australia is not distant enough from modern industrial England. In *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*, the centrepieces of what we might call Lawrence's “Australian Period,” between *The Lost Girl* and *St. Mawr*, Lawrence evokes a rich Australian landscape, edenic and arcadian, but condemns the modern, mechanistic, and degenerate colonial society transplanted from England. There is, therefore no single Lawrentian vision of Australia. Instead we find wild effusions and fumings, contradictions and oscillations, stemming from his passionate engagement with a country which seemed to him at once familiar, and foreign.

Both the critical and biographical elements of this study have been greatly facilitated by the three volumes of *The Cambridge Biography of D. H. Lawrence*, and the eight volumes of *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. As David Lodge observes, with reference to the first volume of *The Cambridge Biography* by John Worthen, “modern literary biography” enables an understanding of how “writers convert their experience, especially their emotional and erotic experience, into literary fiction” and Lawrence, through his copious letters, “is an ideal subject.”<sup>1</sup> Lawrence's large body of letters is indeed a gold mine for biographers, literary critics, and social historians. In addition to offering fresh readings of Lawrence's most obviously Australian texts, I will also examine all of his writing about Australia, in his letters, and in a range of texts not normally noted for their Australian content. The result, I hope, is some new perspectives, both critical and biographical, on the origins and significance of Australia in Lawrence's writing, and in his wider regenerative quest.

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<sup>1</sup> David Lodge, *The Practice of Writing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 100.



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## CHRONOLOGY

*Note:* Much of the information below is reproduced from chronologies in the Cambridge editions of *The Boy in the Bush* and *Kangaroo*. Additional entries highlighting Lawrence's engagement with Australia are sourced largely from *The Cambridge Biography D. H. Lawrence*, and *The Cambridge Edition of the Letters and Works of D. H. Lawrence*.

Dates refer to D. H. Lawrence and the first publication of his works in London, unless otherwise specified.

19 September 1876	Birth of Mary Louisa ("Mollie") Skinner in Perth, Western Australia
11 September 1885	Birth of D. H. Lawrence in Eastwood Nottinghamshire
1902-1908	Pupil teacher; student at University College, Nottingham
7 December 1907	First publication; "A Prelude" in <i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i>
October 1908	Appointed as teacher at Davidson Road School, Croydon
November 1909	Publishes five poems in <i>English Review</i>
19 January 1911	<i>The White Peacock</i> (New York); contains Lawrence's first reference to Australia
19 November 1911	Ill with pneumonia; resigns his teaching post on 28 February 1912
March 1912	Meets Frieda Weekley; they elope to Germany on 3 May
23 May 1912	<i>The Trespasser</i>
July 1913	Advises May Holbrook that "the emigration idea is, I should say, a good



	one. Australia is a new country, new morals"
February 1913	<i>Love Poems and Others</i>
29 May 1913	<i>Sons and Lovers</i>
by July 1913	"The Primrose Path" (first draft); protagonist visits Sydney, Australia
1 April 1914	<i>The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd</i> (New York)
13 July 1914	Marries Frieda Weekley in London
26 November 1914	<i>The Prussian Officer and Other Stories</i>
30 September 1915	<i>The Rainbow</i> ; suppressed by court order on 13 November
8 December 1915	After reading anthropological works by Sir James Frazer asserts that "blood-consciousness" and "blood-being" are "the origin of totem" and "the reason some [Australian Aboriginal] tribes no doubt really <i>were</i> kangaroos"
June 1916	<i>Twilight in Italy</i>
July 1916	<i>Amores</i>
26 November 1917	<i>Look! We Have Come Through!</i>
1918	<i>Letters of a V. A. D.</i> by "R. E. Leake" (pseudonym for Mollie Skinner)
October 1918	<i>New Poems</i>
November 1919–February 1920	In Italy including Capri and Sicily
20 November 1919	<i>Bay</i>
May 1920	<i>Touch and Go</i>
9 November 1920	Private publication of <i>Women in Love</i> (New York)
25 November 1920	<i>The Lost Girl</i> ; includes Lawrence's first Australian character, Dr. Alexander Graham

10 May 1921	<i>Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious</i> (New York)
November 1921	Typescript of <i>Mr Noon</i> (novel abandoned by October 1922, published 1984); includes reference to Australia
12 December 1921	<i>Sea and Sardinia</i> (New York)
19 February 1921	Informs Frieda's mother a week before embarkation that "the ship goes on, to Australia," indicating Australia in his sights before meeting Australians on board ship
26 February 1922	Sails from Naples for Ceylon
14 April 1922	<i>Aaron's Rod</i> (New York); contains Lawrence's second Australian character, Francis Dekker
4 May 1922	Arrives Fremantle, Western Australia
5-6 May 1922	Meets William Siebenhaar (again on 18 May
By 6-8 May 1922	At Mollie Skinner's convalescent home, "Leithdale," Darlington near Perth
18 May 1922	Sails for Sydney
?27-28 May 1922	In Sydney
29 May-10 August 1922	At Thirroul, New South Wales; writes most of <i>Kangaroo</i> , c. 3 June-15 July
1 August 1922	Visits Sydney on "Wattle Day," (wattle known as Mimosa outside Australia)
11 August 1922	Departs Sydney for San Francisco
15 August 1922	In Wellington, New Zealand
4 September 1922	Arrives San Francisco
11 September 1922	Arrives Taos, New Mexico



16 October 1922	Completes revision of <i>Kangaroo</i> including “new” last chapter
23 October 1922	<i>Fantasia of the Unconscious</i> (New York)
24 October 1922	<i>England, My England</i> (New York)
March 1923	<i>The Ladybird, The Fox, The Captain’s Doll</i>
23 March 1923–9 July 1923	In Mexico
10 May 1923	Begins <i>Quetzalcoatl</i> (early version of <i>The Plumed Serpent</i> ) published 1995
9 July 1923	Receives Mollie Skinner’s letter advising “The House of Ellis” finished and despatched to Robert Mountsier
19 August 1923	Receives “The House of Ellis”
27 August 1923	<i>Studies of Classic American Literature</i> (New York)
13 September 1923	<i>Kangaroo</i>
2 September 1923	Writes to MLS offering to “re-cast” “The House of Ellis”
24 September 1923	Sends notebooks 1–3 (208 pages) to Thomas Seltzer for typing; first uses novel’s published title, <i>The Boy in the Bush</i>
9 October 1923	<i>Birds, Beasts and Flowers</i> (New York)
14 November 1923	Finishes most of <i>The Boy in the Bush</i>
?19 December 1923	Dorothy Brett and others agree to go with Lawrences to New Mexico
c. 9 January 1924	In London, writes new last chapter for <i>The Boy in the Bush</i>
28 August 1924	<i>The Boy in the Bush</i> with Mollie Skinner
June 1924	Begins <i>St. Mawr</i> in New Mexico

24 December 1924	Writes "Preface to <i>Black Swans</i> " for a novel by Mollie Skinner
14 May 1925	<i>St. Mawr together with The Princess</i> ; <i>St. Mawr</i> contains Australian characters, Rico and the Manbys
July 1925	<i>Black Swans</i> by Mollie Skinner
September 1925–June 1928	In England and, mainly, in Italy
7 December 1925	<i>Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine</i>
12 December 1925	Returns Mollie Skinner's story "The Hand" to <i>Adelphi</i> having "edited it"
21 January 1926	<i>The Plumed Serpent</i>
25 March 1926	<i>David</i>
14 May 1928	<i>The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories</i>
June 1928–March 1930	In Switzerland and, principally, in France
July 1928	<i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> privately published (Florence); contains reference to Australia
3 December 1928	Returns Mollie Skinner's typescript "Eve in the Land of Nod" partly revised
18 December 1928	The Australian writer and publisher P. R. Stephensen spends two days with the Lawrences in Bandol, France, discusses publishing reproductions of Lawrence's paintings by Mandrake Press; Lawrence begins an intense, avuncular relationship with Stephensen
16 February 1929	Tells Stephensen: "you Australians want it quick and easy"

7 June 1929	Informs Stephensen: "Anxious to see a copy" of the book of paintings;
July 1929	Exhibition of paintings in London raided by police; <i>Pansies</i> (manuscript seized earlier in mail)
September 1929	<i>The Escaped Cock</i> (Paris)
12 February 1930	Writes three letters praising Spring and recalling the "marvellous mimosa" in "Australia"
2 March 1930	Dies in Vence, Alpes Maritime, France; Frieda "put lots and lots of mimosa on his coffin"

## REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

References are generally footnoted throughout the thesis. In-text references, using the abbreviations listed below, have been used for the volumes of *The Cambridge Edition of the Letters and Works of D. H. Lawrence*, or other standard editions of the works, the typescript of a novel by M. L. Skinner, which Lawrence partially edited, suggesting some new text, and *The Cambridge Biography of D. H. Lawrence* (three volumes).

## Letters

- (i) James T. Boulton, ed. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- (ii) George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- (iii) James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- (iv) Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume IV. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- (v) James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume V. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- (vi) James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton, with Gerald M. Lacey, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume VI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- (vii) Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton, eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume VII. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- (viii) James T. Boulton, ed. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Volume VIII. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

## Works

- A* *Apocalypse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
- AR* *Aaron's Rod*. Ed. Mara Kalnins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- BB* *The Boy in the Bush*. With M. L. Skinner. Ed. Paul Eggert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- CP *D. H. Lawrence: The Complete Poems*. Eds. Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts. New York: Penguin, 1993.
- EME *England, My England and Other Stories*. Ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- IR *Introductions and Reviews*. Eds. N. H. Reeve and John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- K *Kangaroo*. Ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- LCL *Lady Chatterley's Lover and A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover."* Ed. Michael Squires. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- LG *The Lost Girl*. Ed. John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- MEH *Movements in European History*. Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press, 1925.
- MM *Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.
- MM II *Mornings in Mexico and Other Essays*. Ed. Virginia Crosswhite Hyde. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- MN *Mr Noon*. Ed. Lindeth Vasey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- P *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*. Ed. Edward D. McDonald. London: Heinemann, 1936.
- P II *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence*. Eds. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore. London: Heinemann, 1968.
- PS *The Plumed Serpent*. Ed. L. D. Clark. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- PU *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*. Ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Q *Quetzalcoatl*. Ed. Louis L. Martz. New York: New Directions Books, 1995.
- R *The Rainbow*. Ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- RDP *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*. Ed. Michael Herbert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- SCAL *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Eds. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- SL *Sons and Lovers*. Eds. Helen Baron and Carl Baron. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

- SM St. Mawr and Other Stories.* Ed. Brian Finney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- SS Sea and Sardinia.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
- STH Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays.* Ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- TI Twilight in Italy.* Ed. Paul Eggert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- VGOS The Vicar's Garden and Other Stories.* Ed. N. H. Reeve. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- WL Women in Love.* Eds. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- WP The White Peacock.* Ed. Andrew Robertson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- WRA The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories.* Eds. Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Typescript by M. L. Skinner

“ELN” “Eve in the Land of Nod.” By M. L. Skinner. Unpublished Typescript, circa 1928. J. S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth.

### Biography

- EY John Worthen, D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912.* The Cambridge Biography, Volume I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- TE Mark Kinkead-Weekes, D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912-1922.* The Cambridge Biography, Volume II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- DG David Ellis, D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-1930.* The Cambridge Biography, Volume III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.



## PROLOGUE

It is useful to note that Sydney, an important locale in Lawrence's evocations of Australia, did not possess its emblematic harbour bridge at the time of his visit in 1922. The bridge was completed in 1932. Had Lawrence seen it, we might speculate that he would have viewed the great, grey bow of steel as a monstrous travesty of his beloved regenerative symbol, the rainbow, and further evidence that modern Australia was, as Somers observes in *Kangaroo*, "one step further gone" than England (*K*, 49:26). Somers, therefore, in contemplating the "forlorn" city, is moved unequivocally by "a huge, brilliant, supernatural rainbow spanning all Sydney" (*K*, 156:13-16), unaware that a massive metal arch will later intrude, spanning the two shores of Sydney harbour.

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INTRODUCTION

Lawrence's literary engagement with Australia spans his entire working life. There are references to Australia in Lawrence's first novel and in his last. If we examine Lawrence's work as a whole, we find that, in addition to *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*, co-authored with Mollie Skinner, there are four other works of fiction in which he explores Australia and/or Australianness in some depth, and a further three in which Australia is mentioned. Lawrence's first fictional reference to Australia is in "The Vicar's Garden" (2009), written in 1907, where a young man dies in a parched Australia.<sup>1</sup> In *The White Peacock* (1911), Annable, a gamekeeper, is thought to have vanished in the Australian bush. In "The Primrose Path," written in 1913 and published in 1922, Lawrence explores the degeneracy of Daniel Sutton, who returns to England after a sojourn in Sydney. In *The Lost Girl* (1920) Alvina Houghton has an Australian lover, Dr Alexander Graham, who is suspected of having Australian Aboriginal blood, and who galvanises her ambitions to leave her English middle class origins, initially with the possibility of joining him in Australia. In *Aaron's Rod* (1922) Aaron Sisson meets the ultra modern Francis Dekker, an Australian minor aristocrat, and Lawrence continues to explore the possibility that Australia represents something oppositional to life in England and Europe, and may ultimately be regenerative. In *Mr. Noon*, which Lawrence wrote largely between November 1920 and February 1921, the narrator likens a remote part of Europe to Australia. *St. Mawr* (1925) satirises the colonial aristocratic pretensions of Rico and the Manbys, Australians residing in England. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Constance Chatterley wonders whether she and Mellors might start a new life in Australia. And finally, although desperately ill with tuberculosis, at the end of 1928, Lawrence summoned enough strength to contribute to the typescript of another of Mollie Skinner's Australian novels, "Eve in the Land of Nod."

World War I provided the impetus for Lawrence's all-consuming quest for personal regeneration, exemplified by his quest, from early 1915, for a utopian community, "Rananim" (ii. 252). At first Lawrence felt England itself might be regenerated. As the war progressed he became disillusioned and turned to America. At the same time Australia attracted his attention, and in late 1915 he read Sir James Frazer's work on Australian

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Paul Eggert and Bruce Steele for directing me to this reference.

Aboriginal anthropology (ii. 470), and in early 1916, Grant Watson's adventure novel *Where Bonds are Loosed* (ii. 502). Lawrence's attitude to America was, however, at best ambivalent, more so as the war progressed. Moreover, the presence of Australia in the pre-war "The Primrose Path," and later in *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod*, and *Mr Noon*, I contend, indicates that Lawrence conceived and developed his vision of Ranim with Australia at the back of his mind. Australia might also be a site for regeneration, alongside an increasingly problematised America. This proposition, I believe, throws a very different light on Lawrence's much reported decision to approach America from the west, Ceylon, and then Australia, rather than from the east – directly from Europe. In addition to wanting to visit his friends the Brewsters in Ceylon, Lawrence, I contend, was attracted to the idea that he could also see Australia before arriving in America.

Clearly, Lawrence did not theorise the nature of the Australian psyche to the extent that he did the American in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923). And *Studies*, with its sweeping examination of American literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its commentary on modern America, demonstrates such a tangible and weighty engagement with America, that it is not surprising that Lawrence's relationship with Australia has appeared secondary. However, Lawrence's major Australian novels, *Kangaroo* (1923) *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), and also the novelette *St. Mawr* (1925) represent a comparable effort by Lawrence to engage and understand another new world culture with British colonial origins, albeit through fiction rather than through the more philosophical and critical approach he took in *Studies*. Lawrence was disappointed with the society he found in Australia and *Kangaroo*, I will argue, is largely "degenerative" in its themes. *The Boy in the Bush*, by contrast, which is partly a *bildungsroman*, is more "regenerative" and positive, although inconclusive at its conclusion. In *St. Mawr* (1925), Lawrence returns to his earlier degenerative concerns engaging in a merciless satire of Australian expatriates in England. The Australian characters are central to Lawrence's purpose in *St. Mawr*, and although it is not a purely Australian work, *St. Mawr* is manifestly an anti-Australian one, and for this reason should be admitted to Lawrence's Australian *oeuvre*. Significantly, *St. Mawr* also offers a synthesis of his summations of the three Anglophone societies which fascinated and frustrated him – those of England, Australia, and America.

In his correspondence, Lawrence's engagement with Australia approximates the period of his literary engagement. He first refers to Australia in a letter to his sister Ada on

8 November 1911 (*i.* 324). The following year he commended the idea of emigration to Australia (*i.* 425), and I have touched on his references to Australia early in World War I, at the time he was formulating his vision of Rananim. Lawrence also corresponded freely from Australia during his stay in 1922. The letters highlight the negative impact of Australian culture. He described the people in degenerationist and modernist terms as “like so many mechanical animals” (*iv.* 264). The landscape, however, was appealing and he wrote that “Australia itself has a weird fascination” (*iv.* 270). In December 1928, he entered into an intense correspondence with P. R. Stephensen, an expatriate Australian author and publisher living in London, who published a book of Lawrence’s paintings. Lawrence’s last references to Australia occur in three letters written on 12 February 1930, including one to Maria Huxley (*vii.* 646), two weeks before his death, thereby concluding an “Australian” span of over eighteen years.

On the basis of the importance of Australia in the five major works of fiction Lawrence had published between 1920 and 1924, I propose, therefore, an “Australian period” or perhaps “extended Australian period” in the life and canon of D. H. Lawrence. I date this period from May 1920, when Lawrence completed *The Lost Girl* (*iii.* 515), through completion of *Aaron’s Rod* in June 1921, completion of *Kangaroo* in 1922-3 and *The Boy in the Bush* in 1923-4, to September 1924, when he finished *St. Mawr* (*v.* 121). We must also note the mention of Australia in *Mr Noon*, on which Lawrence had suspended work by October 1922. This approximately four and a half year period represents Lawrence’s most concentrated literary engagement with Australia.

Lawrence’s two well-known Australian novels are, of course central to his visions of Australia. In many respects, Australia, once he had experienced it, represented to Lawrence a further example of the failure of modern industrial (and importantly British) civilisation. This is particularly evident in *Kangaroo*, where much of the action occurs in metropolitan Sydney. The non-British Australia, however, the Australia of the bush, which Lawrence imaged both as empty, and as harbouring an inscrutable spirituality derived, in part, from the Australian Aborigines, remained for Lawrence a tantalising, if unrealised site for individual regeneration. In the sections of *Kangaroo* which evoke landscape, and in *The Boy in the Bush*, where Lawrence had a second bite at Australia, he offers a still problematic, but more utopian vision of Australia. *Kangaroo*, with its blend of autobiographical travelogue and modernistic authorial interventions, is also Lawrence’s most stylistically innovative novel, and although largely degenerative in its concerns, it is

arguably, his most regenerative in form. *The Boy in the Bush*, the result of an unlikely collaboration with the obscure Australian author Mollie Skinner, represents a different kind of innovation, highly unusual in fiction. For Skinner, the collaboration brought temporary fame. For Lawrence, it provided an unexpected opportunity to engage Australia a second time, and explore themes either absent or undeveloped in *Kangaroo*. Most importantly, Lawrence's transformation of Skinner's "The House of Ellis" enabled him to give expression to his cherished vision of community. *The Boy in the Bush*, with its regenerative utopian theme, may, therefore, be seen as an enduring literary expression of his quest for Rananim, just as the Kiowa ranch in New Mexico, where he resided with his wife Frieda, and Dorothy Brett, represents its most salient physical expression.

It is also important to consider some of Lawrence's assumptions about Australia which he would have derived from his schooling and wider reading. We must presume that Lawrence had an understanding of the historical links between Great Britain and Australia, and Australia's transition from a single penal settlement, to a series of prosperous self-governing colonies, which ultimately federated within the British Empire. Australia exported large amounts of produce to the British Isles and Lawrence, like Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922),<sup>2</sup> may also have tasted an Australian apple, before visiting Australia. He was also aware that, for many British, Australia represented a country of great promise, and emigration to the antipodes was seen as one way of relieving social and economic pressures in Britain and regenerating British stock. Lawrence's fictional representation of Australia occurs in the wider cultural context of British fiction about Australia. Lawrence read a range of British novels which depict utopian and/or regenerative or adventure visions of Australia and the antipodes, including Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (set in New Zealand), and Rolf Boldrewood's rollicking Australian novel *Robbery Under Arms* (1888). Lawrence was also familiar with the more menacing Australian presence in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

Lawrence's quest for regeneration is a major theme in much of his work, and is an important driver in his evocations of Australia. Interwoven and contrasted with regeneration, is its polar opposite – the spectre of degeneration. Lawrence's regenerative quest, including his Rananim, must be seen as part of his response to the wider

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<sup>2</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 152.

degeneration anxieties which prevailed at the *fin de siècle* and beyond. To a large extent, these anxieties can be attributed to the rise of Darwinism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Lawrence, like his contemporaries, was exposed to, and actively engaged a range of discourses which fall loosely under the term “degeneration.” The idea of degeneration constituted an important context for the emergence of modern literature around the *fin de siècle*. Fears of moral, social and artistic degeneration in western industrial society arose in the 1880s out of the wide body of scientific and pseudo-scientific theory and opinion which developed in England and Europe and spread to Australia and the United States in response to the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859), and subsequently his *The Descent of Man* (1871). The publication of *The Origin of Species* has been seen as of epochal significance. In his study *Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910*, published in 1940, Leo J. Henkin writes: “Since then a new race has come into the world. Everyone born since the year 1859 has breathed in the ideas and opinions which make up the philosophy of evolution.”<sup>3</sup> Darwinism was, (and still is), interpreted variously, appearing to support both jingoistic beliefs in British progress and imperial strength, as well as pessimistic notions of social degeneration. It suggested linearity and progress, but also reversal. Lawrence, having “breathed in the ideas” of evolution, exhaled a uniquely personal response. He rejected the singularity at the heart of Darwinian orthodoxy, with all life rooted in a remote past, in favour of two oppositional principles travelling towards each other “lessening the distance between the two of them” (*STH*, 98:6). Lawrence’s Australian *oeuvre* represents part of this fundamental contestation of received Darwinian evolutionary theory, and his creative achievement cannot be fully grasped unless we consider his profound disagreement with Darwinism and many of the ideas it engendered in the post-Darwin world-view. Thus, while Lawrence absorbed many of the anxieties and attitudes held by Darwinists and degenerationists, their concerns with the future of modern industrial civilisation, he developed a unique regenerative response. In part he was drawn to cyclical theories of birth and decay, espoused by Oswald Spengler, Flinders Petrie and Friedrich Nietzsche, which suggested the inevitability, even desirability of degeneration as the precursor to social regeneration. But Lawrence also held optimistic utopian ideals, and his *Rananim* drew on this tradition in English literature. Ultimately, Lawrence was an

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<sup>3</sup> Leo J. Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910: The Impact of Evolution on Victorian Fiction* (New York City: Corporate Press Inc., 1940), p. 13.



artist, and it is not surprising that his outlook was restless, creative and contradictory. Lawrence's responses to modern industrial society race, gender, and empire are also important themes in his works and changed over time. In his Australian works we find Lawrence struggling with disappointments as well as expressing new visions, and a continuing underlying contestation of Darwinism. This thesis, therefore, begins with an examination of Darwinism and degeneration theory, and their impact on Lawrence, followed by a discussion of some of the degenerative and regenerative social visions they spawned. I will then examine Lawrence's distinctive regenerative vision, which he proposed as an alternative to prevailing attitudes and assumptions about the way western industrial society should develop. I will also consider the importance of Lawrence's interest in Australia in the context of early twentieth-century migration to Australia. Finally, I will appraise Lawrence's entire literary engagement with Australia – a country he characterised as both degenerative and regenerative to his own cherished but embattled sense of Englishness.

This thesis does not offer any new evidence in relation to the details of Lawrence's stay in Australia. By Lawrence's own account he and Frieda met very few people, other than Mollie Skinner near Perth, and some British migrants met on board ship while staying at Thirroul. From Thirroul he wrote: "Here in N. S. W. not a soul knows about me, I don't present any letters of introduction: and I like that much the best" (iv. 267). The biographical nature of *Kangaroo* has, however, stimulated interest in the novel as a record of Lawrence's experience of Australia – particularly the extent to which he may have been aware of secret armies, such as that which is organised by Ben Cooley in the novel. A reconstruction of Lawrence's movements in Sydney and speculation about his involvement with paramilitary organisations may be found in Robert Darroch, *D. H. Lawrence in Australia*.<sup>4</sup> A detailed account of Lawrence's life at Thirroul, with more cautious speculations about his involvement with these organisations is contained in Joseph Davis, *D. H. Lawrence at Thirroul*.<sup>5</sup> Rather than traversing Lawrence "territory" in Australia, however, I hope to throw new light on the significance of his imagined Australia on his overall life and in his art, which, as David Ellis observes, "appeared locked together" (DG, 535). There is no single Lawrentian response to Australia. Symbolically, however, it was mimosa, Australian wattle, which Lawrence recalled fondly in some of his last letters, a

<sup>4</sup> Robert Darroch, *D. H. Lawrence in Australia* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Davis, *D. H. Lawrence at Thirroul* (Sydney: Imprint, 1989).

reminder of what he saw as an enduring and regenerative element within Australia, the bush. It is fitting, therefore, that Frieda cast mimosa into his grave.

## 1. DARWINISM, DEGENERATION AND LAWRENCE

In his introduction to a facsimile edition of *The Origin of Species*, Ernst Mayr, writing in the 1960s, describes Darwinism as Charles Darwin's refutation of the "prevailing explanation for organic diversity" found in "the story of creation in Genesis."<sup>1</sup> Darwin was not the first evolutionist but it is his theory of natural selection which differentiates him from his predecessors.<sup>2</sup> "Natural Selection," the title of *The Origin of Species*'s fourth chapter, is described by D. R. Oldroyd as "the core of his whole book" and, in addition to its impact on the sciences, it has been responsible for the "remarkable changes in such subjects as social theory, literature and philosophy."<sup>3</sup> Darwin begins this chapter by drawing an analogy between man's ability to select favourable characteristics and breed them into animals, and the ability of nature to do the same.<sup>4</sup> He then articulates his theory of natural selection:

If during the long course of ages and under varying conditions of life, organic beings vary at all in the several parts of their organisation, and I think this cannot be disputed; if there be, owing to the high geometrical powers of increase of each species, at some age, season, or year, a severe struggle for life, and this certainly cannot be disputed; then, considering the infinite complexity of the relations of all organic beings to each other and to their conditions of existence, causing an infinite diversity in structure, constitution and habits, to be advantageous to them, I think it would be a most extraordinary fact if no variation ever had occurred useful to each being's own welfare, in the same way as so many variations have occurred useful to man. But if variations useful to any organic being do occur, assuredly individuals thus characterised will have the best chance of being preserved in the struggle for life; and from the strong principle of inheritance

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Mayr, "Introduction," *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, by Charles Darwin (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> D. R. Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts: An Introduction to the Darwinian Revolution* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1980), pp. 88-89.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 80.

they will tend to produce offspring similarly characterised. This principle of preservation I have termed Natural Selection.<sup>5</sup>

Precisely what Darwin meant by this passage, and indeed, *The Origin of Species* as a whole, was open to wide interpretation, depending upon the audience. The implications for humanity were far from clear.

### *Darwinism and Darwinisms*

Ernst Mayr asserted confidently in the early 1960s that “the battle for the recognition of evolution is won.”<sup>6</sup> More recently, Gillian Beer in *Darwin's Plots* shows how the linguistic ambiguities and intricacies of Darwin's language and meanings have affected and complicated both historical and current responses to his work in both science and literature. Beer identifies “opposing conceptual elements” in Darwin's term “natural selection” noting that it encompasses positive and negative, both “profusion” and “death.”<sup>7</sup> Beer comments that “even now, the articulation of Darwinian theory is fraught with multiple meanings that Darwin himself fought to control” noting, as an example, that it has been used to both justify and condemn colonialism.<sup>8</sup> Darwin's evolutionary theory, therefore, remains controversial. Richard Dawkins, in *The Blind Watchmaker*, an impassioned treatise in support of the continuing veracity of Darwinism, in the face of opposition from late twentieth-century creationists, describes the paradox lying at the heart of what he sees as continuing misunderstandings of Darwin and the persistence of the Biblical account of creation: “Natural selection is the blind watchmaker, blind because it has no purpose in view. Yet the living results of natural selection overwhelmingly impress us with the illusion of design and planning.”<sup>9</sup> George Levine, in his “Foreword” to Beer's *Darwin's Plots* refers to the controversy which remains in both scientific and social scientific circles as “the continuing combat between palaeontological and microbiological evolutionary biology” and “the Victorian battle between God and Darwinian materialism.”<sup>10</sup> This is not

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp.126-127.

<sup>6</sup> Mayr, “Introduction,” *The Origin of Species*, p. xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. xviii.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. xxi.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> George Levine, “Foreword,” *Darwin's Plots*, p. xi.

the place to debate the current fortunes of Darwinism. What is clear, however, is that Darwinism continues to be a force in scientific and intellectual debate, as it was in Lawrence's time.

Beer, in a manner consistent with Dawkins's picture of evolutionary randomness describes the impact of *The Origin of Species* thus: "Instead of teleology and forward plan, the future is an uncontrollable welter of possibilities."<sup>11</sup> It was this absence of certainty applied to humans which spawned, amongst other things, the degenerationist fears and anxieties which emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century, and which remained influential through the Edwardian era into the interwar period – the span of Lawrence's life. Beer's study of Darwin's language and his meanings greatly assists in explaining the speed and breadth of the reception of *The Origin of Species*, and how it came to inform a diverse range of attitudes, ideologies, sciences, social sciences and pseudo-sciences. Beer remarks of Darwin that "his non-technical language (which may indeed have imagined a technical readership) allowed a wide public to read his work and appropriate his terms to a variety of meanings."<sup>12</sup> The diversity of meanings ascribed to Darwinism is explicable if we consider two questions arising from Darwin's theory of natural selection quoted earlier. What did Darwin mean by "a severe struggle for life" and does this apply to man? In regard to "the struggle," Darwin himself explained: "I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being upon another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny."<sup>13</sup> The interdependence noted by Darwin here has often been lost on individuals wishing to argue that his theories amounted simply to crude competition and brutality. While a "counter-movement," which included "A. R. Wallace (the co-founder of natural selection)" saw the importance of "mutual co-operation" in the human struggle, "it was the harnessing of biological science to liberal individualism" which predominated in the late nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

The absence of "man" in *The Origin of Species* is intriguing. As Beer remarks "the human is everywhere and nowhere in his argument."<sup>15</sup> The only mention of the

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<sup>11</sup> Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. xviii.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. xxv.

<sup>13</sup> Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. xix.

applicability of *The Origin of Species* to humans is in the final chapter where Darwin writes:

In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity of gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history.<sup>16</sup>

As Beer points out, however, this was a careful and strategic omission. Soon after *The Origin of Species* was published Darwin wrote:

With respect to man, I am very far from wishing to obtrude my belief; but I thought it dishonest to quite conceal my opinion. Of course it is open to everyone to believe that man appeared by a separate miracle, though I do not myself see the necessity or probability.<sup>17</sup>

And there are important hints in *The Origin of Species* pointing to Darwin's extending his analysis to include humans. Darwin writes: "Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life."<sup>18</sup> Beer notes that Darwin's early notebooks reveal his belief in the inherent equality of all forms of life, quoting Darwin's observation that "people often talk of the wonderful event of intellectual man appearing – the appearance of insects with other senses is more wonderful."<sup>19</sup> Beer points out that from the outset, despite the deliberate omission of humans, many readers simply placed man directly into Darwin's argument, thereby, as Beer puts it "manifesting again precisely the overweening pride which Darwin saw as typical of man's ordering of experience."<sup>20</sup> Beer concludes, therefore, that "the absence [in *The Origin of Species*] of any reference to man as the

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<sup>16</sup> Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p. 488.

<sup>17</sup> Darwin quoted in Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Darwin quoted in Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

crowning achievement of the natural and supernatural order made the text subversive.”<sup>21</sup> It destabilised the received assumption that humans were the acme of a divine intention.

“Man,” however, continued to be read into Darwinism, and Leo J. Henkin observes that in England, by the end of the nineteenth century, Darwinism had received broad acceptance by “churchmen of every faith.”<sup>22</sup> Darwinism came to permeate the English world view. In the face of England’s booming economy, there was a strong sense that Darwinian evolutionary theory was a vindication of English progress because it “seemed only a generalisation of everyday life.”<sup>23</sup> The subtlety at the heart of Darwin’s theory, his rejection of teleology, the fact that “he evades any suggestion that the world is now accomplished and has reached its final and highest condition,” as Beer puts it,<sup>24</sup> was lost to many. Darwinism came to be implicated in a universal belief in the inexorable and linear progress “forward” of western industrial society. “By the time Lawrence was writing,” Anne Fernihough observes, “Darwinian theory had been absorbed into the culture in a rather simplified and distorted form.”<sup>25</sup> Drawing on Gillian Beer, Fernihough notes that “Darwin proved unable to prevent teleology from infiltrating popular conceptions of his theories,” because of the material progress of the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> It is this received understanding of Darwinism, in both its popular and scientific guises, which Lawrence appears to have grasped, and attacked, rather than the profusion, and multiple possibilities available in the future which Darwin saw as possible through natural selection.

It is, however, important to consider the countervailing pessimistic strand in *The Origin of Species*, which was noted by those who observed the negative aspects of nineteenth-century progress. Darwin writes:

We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see or we forget that the birds which are idly singing around us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel*, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> Beer, *Darwin’s Plots*, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Anne Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p. 62.

For those who focussed on the randomness, harshness and apparent divine indifference inherent in *The Origin of Species*, Darwinism was “seen to nourish the seeds of pessimism.”<sup>28</sup> There were, therefore multiple understandings of how Darwinism affected humanity taking root in early twentieth-century society.

### *Social Darwinism*

With the gradual and ultimately widespread acceptance of Darwinism which followed publication of *The Origin of Species*, and the assumptions about the extensions of his theory to man, came what D. R. Oldroyd refers to as “the bleak doctrine of Social Darwinism that so disfigured social theorising in the late nineteenth century,” and “the idea of evolutionary progress through mediation of the struggle for existence.”<sup>29</sup> Dawkins remarks on the “racist and other disagreeable overtones” of Social Darwinism.<sup>30</sup> Oldroyd offers a useful appraisal of Social Darwinism:

The movement known as Social Darwinism was made up of people who tried – in many different or even contradictory ways – to apply the theories of Darwinian evolutionism to descriptions of the way society is constituted, or, more riskily, to say how they thought it ought to be constituted.<sup>31</sup>

Social Darwinism embraces a multitude of beliefs and attitudes. Oldroyd observes that “the general connotation of Social Darwinism is of a loose amalgam of doctrines such as conservatism, militarism, racism, rejection of social welfare programs, eugenics, *laissez-faire* economics and unfettered capitalism.”<sup>32</sup> And the link between Darwinism to Social Darwinism is explained in this way:

Darwin’s theory is, for Social Darwinists, to be accepted. There is a struggle for existence among animals and plants and this results in

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<sup>28</sup> Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel*, p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 201.

<sup>30</sup> Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 250.

<sup>31</sup> Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 204.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.



evolutionary change. But this 'change' is not to be interpreted in a neutral sense. It entails evolutionary 'development,' which may be regarded a 'progressive.' Thus a value judgement immediately intrudes. The term 'progress' has a pleasant ring to it. It sounds as if it is a *good* thing for progress to take place. Therefore, evolutionary change should be cultivated, encouraged or otherwise nurtured. And this, so the Social Darwinists believed, could be achieved by more intense prosecution of the struggle for existence.<sup>33</sup>

The British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) is commonly cited as the founding Social Darwinist. The line between Darwinism and Social Darwinism is, however, imprecise. Spencer developed his own theory of evolution,<sup>34</sup> and it was he who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" which Darwin added to the title of chapter 4 of the fifth edition *The Origin of Species*.<sup>35</sup> William Greenslade points out that "Darwin could not have anticipated what that concept of fitness would undergo," that its meanings became "value-loaded," and that "value was being effectively and widely smuggled into Darwinism."<sup>36</sup> Oldroyd notes that "the distinction in the public mind between Spencerism and Darwinism was not always clear," and that "what is customarily referred to as Social Darwinism might in many cases better be described as Social Spencerism."<sup>37</sup> He cites Spencer's *Man versus the State* (1884), which he notes derives from views Spencer expressed earlier in his *Social Statistics* (1851) as a summation of Spencer's notion of the human struggle for survival:

To become fit for the social state, man has not only to lose his savageness, but he has to acquire the capacities needful for civilised life. [...]The state of transition will of course be an unhappy state. Misery inevitably results from incongruity between constitution and conditions. All these evils which afflict us, and seem to the uninitiated the obvious consequences of this or that removable cause, are unavoidably attendants on the adaptation now in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>36</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, pp. 210, 213.

progress. [...]No power on earth, no cunningly-devised laws of statesmen, no world-rectifying schemes of the humane, no communist panaceas, no reforms that men ever did broach or ever will broach, can diminish them one jot. [...]But there is bound up with the change a normal amount of suffering, which cannot be lessened without altering the very laws of life.<sup>38</sup>

It is also useful to note another of Spencer's works. In *First Principles* (1864), Spencer attempts to unite religion and science, arguing that since "these two great realities are constituents of the same mind[...], there must be a fundamental harmony between them."<sup>39</sup> *First Principles* is an ambitious work, as the title suggests, and Spencer ranges through physics, chemistry, anthropology, geology, sociology, philology and psychology in his quest for a universal truth, and propounds an evolutionary theory which unites human and non-human processes of origin, development and decay. Spencer is in fundamental agreement with Darwin, but claims his own prior and independent discovery of a theory of evolution.<sup>40</sup> This further accounts for the linking of the two theorists in the public mind. Lawrence probably read *First Principles* in 1909,<sup>41</sup> and I will discuss its relevance later in this chapter.

Oldroyd notes the ready acceptance of both Spencerism and Darwinism in America, suggesting that their appeal lies in the American concepts of individual freedom, as enshrined in the United States constitution, and the acceptance of *laissez-faire* economic doctrine which necessarily limits government intervention in society.<sup>42</sup> In America, in the academy, the foremost Social Darwinist was William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), Professor of Political Economy and Social Science at Yale. Yale became a "kind of pulpit for Social Darwinism,"<sup>43</sup> and Sumner believed that "millionaires are a product of natural selection."<sup>44</sup> Social Darwinism also underpinned thinking outside the academy and moved into a range of public discourses. The entrepreneur Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), himself one of Sumner's "millionaires," viewed the world in Social Darwinist terms, writing in his *The Gospel of Wealth* that "while the law [of competition] may be sometimes hard for the

<sup>38</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Man Versus the State*, quoted in Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 208.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (Akron: The Werner Company, 1900), p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>41</sup> Rose Marie Burwell, "A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence's Reading from Early Childhood." *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 3 (1970), p. 216.

<sup>42</sup> Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 213.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>44</sup> S. Persons quoted in Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 214.

individual, it is best for the race, because it ensures the survival of the fittest in every department.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Lawrence's Contestation of Darwinism*

While Lawrence probably did not read Carnegie, he certainly knew of him as a symbol of the aspirations of modern industrial America. This wealthy industrialist provides us with an entrée to Lawrence's engagement with Darwinism as well as his critique of contemporary American society. Lawrence lampoons the American idealism of Carnegie in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, charging him with inventing God in his own image. “Now if Mr Andrew Carnegie, or any other millionaire had wished to invent a God to suit his ends, he could not have done better,” he writes (*SCAL*, 21:14-15). Earlier in *Studies*, Lawrence castigates America with mock-Darwinian terms, for its vision of itself as progressive, and having evolved into a distinct and superior identity, separate from its European origins: “Show us the homunculus of the new era. Go on, show us him. Because all that is visible to the naked European eye, in America, is a sort of recreant European. We want to see this missing link of the next era” (*SCAL*, 11:16-18), he writes. By characterising the modern American as a “homunculus” Lawrence asserts that the modern American is a diminished, regressive type, a pale replica of the European rather than a superior type. Lawrence employs popular evolutionary imagery in mocking America's claim to be the “missing link of the next era” (*SCAL*, 11:18; 433). He also rejects the American achievements of “telephones, tinned meat, Charlie Chaplin, water-taps and World Salvation,” and America's belief in “The Perfectibility of Man, and “the perfectibility of the Ford car” (*SCAL*, 11:24-25, 20:3-4), thereby also rejecting the progressive, materialistic assumptions implicit in much of the received understanding of Darwinism, articulated by those such as Carnegie.

In addition to Spencer and Darwin, Lawrence's education embraced many of the other major thinkers of the second half of the nineteenth-century. Ford Maddox (Hueffer) Ford, the editor of the *English Review*, who published Lawrence's first poems, and whose enthusiastic response to “Nethermere,” an early draft of *The White Peacock* (1911)

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew Carnegie quoted in Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p. 216.

effectively launched Lawrence's career, remarks on the breadth of culture he found in Lawrence's circle at Eastwood.<sup>46</sup> Ford writes:

All the while the young people were talking about Nietzsche and Wagner and Leopardi and Flaubert and Karl Marx and Darwin[...]the French Impressionists and the primitive Italians and play[ed] Chopin or Debussy on the piano. (*i.* 9, and n.1)

James T. Boulton observes that while Ford's appraisal of the Eastwood circle is in part "fanciful," this is a matter of "degree" rather than "kind" (*i.* 9). Even this qualification, however, does not adequately describe Lawrence himself. With the exception of Chopin, Lawrence refers in his letters to all of the eminent individuals noted by Ford (and importantly many others such as T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer), and we can assume that Lawrence also knew of Chopin, and the "French Impressionists and the primitive Italians."

Lawrence read Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in mid-1907,<sup>47</sup> and it had a profound impact, effectively destroying his belief in his received Christianity. In a letter to the Reverend Robert Reid, a Congregationalist minister in Eastwood (*i.* 31, n. 1), Lawrence wrote as a young man in 1907:

Reading of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Renan, J. M. Robertson, Blatchford and Vivian in his Churches and Modern Thought has seriously modified my religious beliefs.

[...]And I would like to know, because I am absolutely in ignorance, what is precisely the orthodox attitude – or say the attitude of the nonconformist Churches to such questions as Evolution, with that the Origin of Sin, and as Heaven and Hell. (*i.* 36-37)

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Robertson, "Introduction," *The White Peacock*. by D. H. Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. xxv.

<sup>47</sup> Burwell, "A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence's Reading," pp. 206,

Lawrence reveals here that, like many who read Darwin, he could no longer reconcile the inexorably long process of evolution with the creationist teachings of the Bible. If this aspect of the Bible was wrong, how could one believe in the rest of it?

John Worthen observes that despite Lawrence's reading of Darwin, Huxley and Haeckel, there is "little trace of Darwin and Huxley in Lawrence's subsequent writing" (*EY*, 179). The reason is that Lawrence utterly rejected Darwinism as an all-embracing explanatory theory of human potential, just as he rejected Christianity and Freudian psychology. Importantly, therefore, the references to Darwinism which are present in Lawrence's work reveal him to be in contest. While Darwin was crucial in shifting Lawrence's spirituality away from Christianity, he did not swallow Darwinism, or any other credo, as a replacement socio-scientific philosophy. Darwinism served as a foil enabling Lawrence to develop his own ideas about human development, such as those he articulates in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. It is in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, however, which he began around 5 September 1914, that Lawrence, in discussing the relationship between Angel Clare and Tess in Hardy's novel, first challenges Darwinism. He proposes that "generations of ultra-Christian training" have resulted in a single "Male Principle" (*STH*, 97:30, 38). He asserts that this is apparent

also in the great scientists or thinkers of the last generation, even Darwin and Spencer and Huxley. For these last conceived of evolution, of one spirit or principle starting at the far end of time, and loneliness traversing Time. But there is not one principle, there are two, travelling always to meet, each step of each one lessening the distance between the two of them. (*STH*, 98:3-6)

For Lawrence, Darwinism is rejected because "evolution" is conceived in singular, male, uni-directional terms. Darwinism in fact upset assumptions of singularity and teleology. As Gillian Beer points out, "natural selection and adaptation suggested that there could be no precedent design," and "the elements of the haphazard lurked in the material of Darwin's theory."<sup>48</sup> But Darwinism does not offer the kind of oppositional force Lawrence envisages, and Lawrence doesn't focus on, or perhaps does not grasp the multiplicity

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<sup>48</sup> Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 38.

inherent in Darwinism. Rather, as I will discuss below, he contests the fundamental assumption in Darwinism that life evolved from a single point. This is the singularity which Lawrence finds in Darwinism. For Lawrence, therefore, even Darwin's "haphazard" workings are too prescriptive and mechanistic. Furthermore, evolution appears to be a value judgement. We can hear Lawrence saying "evolve from what to what?" In *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence, writing on education asserts: "I am many men. Which of them are you going to perfect? I am not a mechanical contrivance" (*SCAL*, 29:4-6). In Rick Rylance's words, he rejects Darwinism because it "lacks dialectical exchange" – and Darwinism's "reductions of human origins and development to a limited causality," fly in the face of Lawrence's "multi-aspected, exploratory understanding" in his novels.<sup>49</sup>

Lawrence's rejection of Darwinian evolutionary theory includes its assumption of a hierarchy of races which is apparent in Darwin's early writing. While Darwin does not deal with race in *The Origin of Species*, his early thoughts on the application of evolution to theories of race and racial fitness and survival are revealed in his *Beagle Diary*, in which he recorded his world travels in the mid-1830s. In Australia he viewed the Aborigines as "some few degrees higher in civilisation, or more correctly a few lower in barbarism, than the Fuegians."<sup>50</sup> While he found Aborigines "far from such utterly degraded beings as usually presented," and remarked that "in their own arts they were admirable," inevitably their contact with alcohol and European diseases would lead to a "decrease in numbers."<sup>51</sup> The Aborigine, he concluded, was unaware that "the White Man" appears "predestined to inherit the country of his children."<sup>52</sup> I will discuss Lawrence's avoidance of this view of the prospects of Australian Aborigines in chapter 8. The development of Lawrence's opposition to Darwinism is revealed in a letter of 21 July 1917 to Eunice Tietjens, where he challenges both evolution and the application of evolutionary principles to racial difference and the way human culture develops in different locations:

One thing – the truth of evolution is *not* true. There is no evolving, only unfolding. The lily is in the bit of dust which is its beginning, lily and

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<sup>49</sup> Rick Rylance, "Ideas, Histories, Generations and Beliefs: the Early Novels to *Sons and Lovers*" in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence* ed., Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Darwin Keynes, ed., *Charles Darwin's Beagle Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 398.

<sup>51</sup> Keynes, *Charles Darwin's Beagle Diary*, pp. 398-399.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 401-402.

nothing but lily: and the lily in blossom is a ne plus ultra: there is no evolving beyond. This is the greatest truth. A lily is a ne plus ultra: so also, a pure Chinaman: there is no evolving beyond, only a slipping back, or rather rotting back, through all the coloured phases of retrogression and corruption, back to nought. This is the real truth. Man was man in eternity, has been man since the beginnings of time, and is man in the resultant eternity, no evolution, only unfolding of what *is* man. And the same with the Chinaman: no evolution beyond the Chinaman, none, none, none. But I don't attempt to define what *is* the Chinaman. (This in reference to your ricksha boy with the ears that suggest a horse's ears.) There are animal *principles* in man, which totemism recognises, but these have nothing evolutionary. (iii. 139)

Lawrence dismisses the implication by Tietjens that the Chinaman is recently evolved from an animal type (the horse). Significantly, however, he does not doubt the "horse's ears" *per se*, rather he explains them in terms of "totemism," presumably derived from his reading of Sir James Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (ii. 470), rather than evolution. In pointing to the completeness and integrity of the lily, Lawrence asserts the primacy of the individual organism. We are not, Lawrence asserts, descended from anything or anyone else. We are intrinsically ourselves. We don't evolve and "become" anything. We "unfold" as we must.

In his Foreword to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), a companion volume to *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921), Lawrence, before outlining his "pollyanalytics," continues his repudiation of evolution asserting: "I do not believe in evolution, but in the strangeness and rainbow-change of ever-renewed creative civilisations" (*PU*, 65:6; 64:18-19). Lawrence proposes a science based on "living experience and sure intuition," a "subjective science" in place of conventional "objective science" (*PU*, 63:32-33). Lawrence's overall rejection of Darwinian evolutionary theory here occurs in the context of his other contest in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* which in its early chapters Fiona Becket notes is "Lawrence's attempt to destabilise what he understands by Freud's definition of 'the unconscious.'"<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Fiona Becket, "Lawrence and Psychoanalysis," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough, p. 221.

In 1924, after his visit to Australia, stimulated by his experience of Mexico and consistent with his view ten years earlier, Lawrence writes unequivocally:

Myself, I don't believe in evolution, like a long string hooked on to a First Cause, and being slowly twisted in unbroken continuity through the ages. I prefer to believe in what the Aztecs called Suns: that is, Worlds successively created and destroyed. The sun itself convulses, and the worlds go out like so many candles when somebody coughs in the middle of them. Then subtly, mysteriously, the sun convulses again, and a new set of worlds begins to flicker alight.

This pleases my fancy better than the long weary twisting of the rope of Time and Evolution, hitched on to the revolving hook of a First Cause. I like to think of the whole show going bust, *bang!* – and nothing but bits of chaos flying about. Then out of the dark, new little twinklings reviving from nowhere, nohow.

[...]I like to think of the world going pop! When the lizards had grown too unwieldy, and it was time they were taken down a peg or two.

[...]The Aztecs said this world, our Sun, would blow up from inside, in earthquakes. Then what will come, in the other dimension, when we are superseded? (*MM*, 12-13, 17)

Lawrence's reiteration of his opposition to evolution, late in life, points to his depth of feeling. The above passage is, however, also important because Lawrence articulates his opposition to Spencer's theory of "a First Cause." This is a direct refutation of Chapter II of Spencer's *First Principles*. Lawrence would have read Spencer's proposition arising from the "origin of the Universe," its "nature" and its "effects produced on our senses," that "we cannot ask how the changes in our consciousness are caused, without inevitably committing ourselves to the hypothesis of a First Cause."<sup>54</sup> Clearly Lawrence was not thus committed. Darwin has a similar belief in the singularity of creation, articulated at the end of *The Origin of Species*, where he refers to a presumed "first creature, the progenitor of innumerable extinct and living descendants."<sup>55</sup> In *First Principles*, Lawrence would also

<sup>54</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p. 488.



have encountered Spencer's discussion of "Evolution and Dissolution,"<sup>56</sup> which in Chapter XXIII Spencer applies to human society. In the above "Aztec" passage, however, Lawrence mischievously asserts a non-scientific Aztec evolutionary theory of birth and decay, a strangely beautiful celebration that humans will one day disappear. The result is that, for Lawrence, the end of the world can be regenerative, something to look forward to. We must, however, not presume that Lawrence was entirely deaf to Spencer. Spencer also argues that "the human organism has grown more heterogeneous among the civilised divisions of the species."<sup>57</sup> Spencer writes that this process is continuing in the two new world societies which came to interest Lawrence so greatly:

Add to which that we have, in the Anglo-Americans, an example of a new variety arising within these few generations; and that, if we may trust to the descriptions of observers, we are likely soon to have another such in Australia.<sup>58</sup>

The reference to new varieties of British people developing in America and Australia must, initially, have been tantalising for Lawrence. Spencer makes no judgement about the quality of these new populations. Lawrence, however, as I will show, does, through his fictional and non-fictional critiques of the modern societies in both countries.

Lawrence's contestation of Darwinism is also evident from his attacks on contemporary writers who promulgated the popular conception of evolution. In his review of H. G. Wells's *The World of William Clissold* (1926), he mocked the novel's perpetuation of teleological assumptions about human progress since the ape:

Cave-men, nomads, patriarchs, tribal Old Men, out they all come again, in the long march of human progress. Mr Clissold, who holds forth against "systems," cannot help systematising us all into a gradual and systematic uplift from the ape. (*P*, 348)

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<sup>56</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 261.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

In his review, Lawrence also alludes to Wells's *Outline of History* and is similarly dismissive. If we consider Lawrence's own *Movements in European History* (1921), we find that Lawrence had already explained his view of human history and "progress," contesting the teleology often ascribed to Darwinism. "We are not the consummation of all life and time," Lawrence writes in the "Introduction," asserting that, "scientific history is all head," and "the logical sequence does not exist until we have made it" (*MEH*, xi). Lawrence was also unimpressed by what he saw as Wells's celebration of modern industrialists in *William Clissold* (vi. 280). He had, however thought highly of Wells's earlier work, praising his portrayal of "lower class life" in *Tono Bungay* in a letter of 1916 (viii. 18-19), but he compared *William Clissold* unfavourably with Wells's earlier novel in the course of his damning review (*P*, 348).

Anne Fernihough observes that Lawrence rejects "the linear version of time upon which Darwinian theory rests" because "presence is continually *deferred*."<sup>59</sup> This is also Lawrence's problem with Christianity which "posits itself...on absence rather than presence."<sup>60</sup> Fernihough also reminds us of Beer's finding that there is an "ambiguity at the heart of Darwinian theory," that:

The 'ascent' or the 'descent' of man may follow the same route but the terms suggest very different evaluations of the experience. The optimistic 'progressive' reading of development can never expunge that other insistence that extinction is more probable than progress, that the individual life-span is never a sufficient register for change or for accomplishment of desire[...].<sup>61</sup>

Lawrence rejects both the "optimistic and pessimistic" because they both result in "a subordination of the present, of individual lives at any given time, to narrative."<sup>62</sup> And the optimistic spin on Darwinism, which sees industrial progress as the pinnacle of human achievement, is, given his working class experience, essentially too bleak for Lawrence. Rick Rylance, in considering Lawrence's early novels proposes that Lawrence, early on, was searching for a "spiritually meaningful form of evolutionary development" and

<sup>59</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p.177.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>61</sup> Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 9

<sup>62</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 177.

therefore drew on a range of “hybrid” sources, although they were “not all fully absorbed.”<sup>63</sup> Fernihough and Rylance, therefore, help explain how Lawrence’s contestation of Darwinism forms an important springboard, not only for his own ideas about psychology, as already mentioned, but also human potential, which he sees not in terms of Darwinian “progress” but in terms of his own ideas about personal regeneration, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

Roger Ebbatson in *The Evolutionary Self* reminds us that Darwinism became such a pervasive and persuasive theory that it would have been impossible for Lawrence not to have been influenced by it. He observes that post-Darwin we are “made more critically aware of the biological factors within the individual” and that Lawrence, along with Hardy and Forster, was “imaginatively quickened by scientific rationalism whilst simultaneously refuting the literalism which that tradition posits.”<sup>64</sup> Importantly, however, Ebbatson observes that “Lawrence’s entire imaginative strategy may be read as an endeavour to redeem and preserve the mysteries of human character from the causation of science.”<sup>65</sup> Paradoxical as it might appear, Ebbatson notes: “Darwinism[...]may be seen as a myth which helps generate the Lawrencean novel.”<sup>66</sup> *The Rainbow* is a depiction of a “society evolving through time,” and *Women in Love*, portrays “a society in dissolution.”<sup>67</sup> The influence of Spencer is also apparent in *Women in Love*. Ebbatson in *Lawrence and the Nature Tradition* aligns Gerald Crich’s “icy disintegration” at the end of the novel with Spencer’s ““extinct suns, fated to remain for ever without further exchange,””<sup>68</sup> at the conclusion of *First Principles*. Gerald “embodies Lawrence’s critique of a civilisation built out of repression and functioning through survival of the fittest.”<sup>69</sup> The “myth which helps to generate the Lawrencean novel” is itself firmly debunked in the novels.

A recent study links Lawrence more closely with Darwinism and scientific thinking in general, than has traditionally been the case. Jeff Wallace in *D. H. Lawrence, Science and the Posthuman*, takes Aldous Huxley’s observation that Lawrence’s rejection of science was predicated on a profound understanding of it, and probes Lawrence’s debt to

<sup>63</sup> Rylance, “Ideas, Histories, Generations and Beliefs,” p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> Spencer quoted in Roger Ebbatson, *Lawrence and the Nature Tradition: A Theme in English Fiction 1859-1914* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self*, p. 99.

science, (and to sociology, psychology, and philosophy), as a basis for arguing a much closer link between contemporary science and Lawrence.<sup>70</sup> Wallace observes that in the face of his wide reading of post-Darwinian scientific literature and his own attempts at theorizing, such as in philosophy and psychology, we may see “the whole of Lawrence’s creative project as sharing, with post-Darwinian science, this exploratory quest to delineate man’s place in nature.”<sup>71</sup> While Wallace sees Lawrence (like Shelley) as registering a “critique of science as an ideology,” he contests “the simplified dichotomies of art and science” promulgated by Leavisite critics.<sup>72</sup> For Wallace, therefore, even the Lawrence who opposed scientific explanations for human experience “was in tune with contemporary, post-Darwinian science in its critical interrogation of all aspects of the “human.””<sup>73</sup> Wallace’s argument, as the title of his work informs us, is deeply concerned with “the human,” and his linking of Lawrence to the quest for the human by post-Darwinian scientists is beyond the scope of this thesis. But Wallace is in danger, nevertheless, of overstating a link between Lawrence and “post-Darwinian science.” Although drawing on Ebbatson’s work,<sup>74</sup> Wallace avoids Ebbatson’s analysis of Lawrence’s attitude to Darwinism, preferring to focus on Lawrence’s understanding of science, rather than his quarrel with it. As with his engagement with Christianity and politics, Lawrence, I contend, takes what he wants from his wide knowledge of science – what he remembers and what he imagines from received orthodoxy – re-fashioning as he wishes. As a consequence, he utilises his knowledge and interest in science as “anti-science.” This is, in essence, Ebbatson’s point in regard to the early novels. Importantly, therefore, in a later novel *Kangaroo*, Lawrence subjects science to satire, just as he does in *Studies of Classic American Literature*, in this case to reinforce the emptiness of the Australian intellect. In the following passage, the Australian political leader and lawyer, nick-named Kangaroo, and an Australian ex-serviceman, who have combined forces to form a right-wing political party, discuss, in trivial terms, the latest scientific development:

Kangaroo then started a discussion of the much-mooted and at the moment fashionable Theory of Relativity.

<sup>70</sup> Jeff Wallace, *D. H. Lawrence, Science and the Posthuman* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 17-18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74, 81.

‘Of course it’s popular,’ said Jack. It absolutely takes the wind out of anybody’s sails who wants to say “I’m *It*”. Even the Lord Almighty is only relatively so and as it were.’ (K, 109:36-40)

The satire cuts in two directions. The “Theory” itself is satirised as “fashionable,” while the discussants are exposed as superficial. The Lawrence character, Somers, the English foreigner, has the chance to participate in the discussion, but his silence aligns him with the critique of science implied by the narrator’s tone.

It is, however, important to note that Lawrence remained fascinated with Darwin the man, and the naturalistic observations contained in his account of his travels around the world on the *Beagle*. This included a visit to Australia in 1836. Lawrence reports in a letter to Aldous Huxley in 1927: “I just read Darwin’s *Beagle* again...I like the book” (vi. 214). Lawrence had probably read Darwin’s account of his travels before his 1907 letter to the Reverend Robert Reid.<sup>75</sup> The *Beagle Diary* is an engaging piece of travel writing rather than a scientific treatise and Lawrence, a perceptive travel writer himself, would doubtless have enjoyed the neat complementarity between their respective visits to Australia. There are some interesting parallels in between Darwin’s and Lawrence’s engagement with Australia. Darwin’s visit lasted around two months and Lawrence’s just over three. With the exception of Darwin’s excursion to Tasmania they traversed a similar route between Sydney and Western Australia, but in reverse order. Darwin arrived in Australia through Sydney and departed from Western Australia, while Lawrence arrived in Western Australia and departed from Sydney. Darwin initially saw Sydney as “a most magnificent testimony to the power of the British nation,” as “a fine town” with its streets in “excellent order.”<sup>76</sup> He also wrote that he had been interested in Australia to find out “the degree of attraction to emigrate”<sup>77</sup> and, as I will argue in chapter 5, the possibility of emigration to Australia and the experience of “pommy” migrants coloured Lawrence’s expectations and impressions of Australia. On his departure from Western Australia, however, Darwin’s summation of Australia in the final paragraph of his diary is far from glowing. Unimpressed by the dry, summer landscape and the convict system underpinning the brash, materialistic society of Sydney, he wrote: “Farewell, Australia! you are a rising child, and doubtless some day will

<sup>75</sup> Burwell, “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading,” p. 203.

<sup>76</sup> Keynes, *Charles Darwin’s Beagle Diary*, p. 396.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

reign a great princess in the South: but you are too great and ambitious for affection, yet not great enough for respect.”<sup>78</sup> Lawrence employs uncannily similar rhetorical language and a similarly imperial theme in his fictional “farewell” to Australia at the conclusion of *Kangaroo*: “Farewell! Farewell! farewell Victoria and Jaz’s wife, farewell Australia, farewell Britain and the great Empire” (*K*, 358:5-6). Both Lawrence and Darwin were keen observers of British life in Australia, and both were ultimately unimpressed with the transplanted British culture.

Importantly, although Lawrence rejected Darwinism he did assimilate much of the language, imagery and attitudes of one of the legacies of Darwinism, theories of degeneration. Although degeneration theory pre-dates Darwinism, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century degenerationist anxieties can be linked to the “descent” or regressive possibility contained within Darwinism, pointed to by Gillian Beer and others.

#### *Darwinism and Theories of Degeneration*

The idea of degeneration is rooted in the emergence of Darwinian evolutionary theory and its aftermath. Darwinism appeared to provide both the impetus and the language to help explain the causes and consequences of the massive shifts in society which occurred in Europe in the period after Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. William Greenslade, in his 1994 study *Degenerationism, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940*, offers the following explanation for the emergence of theories of degeneration:

The growth of degeneration into a fully fledged explanatory myth, with widespread applications, in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, is bound up with the huge economic, social and cultural changes which took place in the major industrialised European states – Britain, France, Germany and Italy. These changes, above all in the urban environment, were new in kind to large sections of the European population, and they were momentous. [...] There was a paradox to be explained, and it was, in simple terms, the growing sense in the last decades of the century of a lack of synchrony between the rhetoric of progress, the confident prediction by the apostles of

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 413.

*laissez-faire* of ever increasing prosperity and wealth, and the facts on the ground, the evidence in front of people's eyes, of poverty and degradation at the heart of ever richer empires.

[...]Founded on the Darwinian revolution in biology, and harnessed to psychological medicine, the idea of degeneration spread to social science, to literature and art. In its scientific and rational practices it offered to diagnose the agencies of the irrational component threatening the orderly progress of the society.<sup>79</sup>

Degeneration theories arose from works such as *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880) by Edwin Ray Lankester, who applied Darwinian principles of natural selection to his study of lower vertebrates, where he identified both higher and degenerate examples, and who translated his findings to humans.<sup>80</sup> This was the down-side, the “descent” possibility in evolution. Examples of degeneration in the scientific world were seen as having wider application in human society. Greenslade observes that in Britain “degeneration was an important source of myth for the post-Darwinian world.”<sup>81</sup> He identifies a “loose assemblage of beliefs” associated with concerns about “poverty and crime, about public health and national and imperial fitness, about decadent artists, ‘new women’ and homosexuals,” which came to be identified with “degenerationism.”<sup>82</sup> As well as influencing scientists, it also influenced social theorists, artists, and public policy. Greenslade notes that while degeneration eventually came to be discredited, it offered, at the time, an apparently scientific or pseudo-scientific basis for the analysis of a range of social, scientific and political issues.

In their “Introduction” to *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman illuminate the subtlety and strength of degeneration theories. They note that degeneration complemented the idea of progress, that it functioned at both literal and figurative levels, that it contained multiple meanings, held a kind of wicked allure as an explanation of otherness, and influenced intellectual and institutional

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<sup>79</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

structures which still endure.<sup>83</sup> In an essay in this collection, Stuart C. Gilman remarks bluntly that “degeneracy[...]must be seen as an ideological belief which was incredibly persuasive” and which “has been used as an excuse for mass murder, prejudice, and every other sort of villainy.”<sup>84</sup> Gilman sees the ultimate response to degeneration as occurring in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s.

Max Nordau’s *Degeneration*, first published in England in 1895, in translation from the German, epitomises the late nineteenth-century anxieties which underpinned theories of degeneration, through the extension of Darwinian theories beyond science, in this case particularly into the arts, but also into society more generally. Nordau writes of the *fin de siècle*:

In our days there have arisen in more highly-developed minds vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind, with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world.<sup>85</sup>

Nordau influenced contemporary degenerationists, as well as later theorists, including Oswald Spengler.<sup>86</sup> Greenslade describes Nordau as “the high priest of the creed of degeneration,”<sup>87</sup> and although there is no record of Lawrence having read his work, Lawrence was familiar with Spengler and other later degenerationists, and *Degeneration* is a salient example of the attitudes which were influential well into the twentieth century. In *Degeneration* Nordau quotes B. A. Morel’s definition of degeneracy: “‘The clearest notion we can form of degeneracy is to regard it as *a morbid deviation from an original type*.’”<sup>88</sup> In his dedication to the Italian criminologist Professor Caesar Lombroso, whom Nordau characterises as having “developed with so much genius” the “notion of degeneracy, first introduced into science by Morel,” Nordau widens the definition of degeneracy, stating that

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<sup>83</sup> J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman, eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. vii, viii, and xii.

<sup>84</sup> Stuart C. Gilman, “Political Theory and Degeneration: From Left to Right, From Up to Down,” in Chamberlin and Gilman, eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, p. 191.

<sup>85</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London: William Heinemann, 1895), p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Bade, quoted in J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, p. 238.

<sup>87</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 120.

<sup>88</sup> B. A. Morel, quoted in Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 16.



‘degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists.’<sup>89</sup>

Nordau sees the problems in society as arising from the rise of large towns, where the inhabitant “breathes an atmosphere charged with organic detritus; eats stale, contaminated, adulterated food” and “feels himself in a state of constant nervous excitement.”<sup>90</sup> In his “Prognosis” for the twentieth century, Nordau lays the blame for many of the ills of society on “hysteria,” “ego-mania,” “mysticism,” and “false Realism.”<sup>91</sup> He pathologises society as a “hospital” and condemns “new forms” of literary expression.<sup>92</sup> He devotes hundreds of pages to a sensational catalogue of modern degeneration, largely associated with decadence in the arts, but also the debilitating effects of modern industrial civilisation. Somewhat surprisingly, Nordau concludes his book optimistically. He argues that since “degenerates[...]are not capable of adaptation,” either a race will emerge “who will know how to find its ease in the midst of a city inhabited by millions,” or who “will simply give it up” because “humanity has a sure means of defence against innovations which impose a destructive effort on its nervous system.”<sup>93</sup> Nordau sees the degenerate in social Darwinian terms, as a type who will not survive. “The degenerate is incapable of adapting himself to existing circumstances,” he writes, honouring the English “scientific investigators” such as “Darwin” and “Spencer.”<sup>94</sup> For Nordau, therefore, Social Darwinism explains the existence of degeneration, *and* offers the solution. The problem and the cure are two sides of the Darwinian coin. Greenslade notes that, while Nordau’s *Degeneration* was initially a runaway success in Europe, England and America, after only two years, its value was vigorously questioned, including by H. G. Wells, the American philosopher William James, and by Sigmund Freud.<sup>95</sup> Theories of degeneration, however, persisted well into the twentieth century as a “generalising shorthand currency” for the general public, providing a platform for attacks on artists.<sup>96</sup>

In 1913 Holbrook Jackson published *The 1890s*, an “interpretive rather than critical” appraisal of movements in the literature and the arts against the background of

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<sup>89</sup> Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. vii.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 536.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 536, 544.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 540-542.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 76, 359.

<sup>95</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, pp. 120, 125, 128.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 128, 130-133.

modernisation.<sup>97</sup> To a great extent, Jackson sought to dispel the one-sided pessimism of writers such as Nordau, seeing the 1890s as “an epoch of experiment” where the “search for a new mode of life was anything but melancholy or diseased.”<sup>98</sup> Jackson celebrates many who were denounced by Nordau, including Oscar Wilde and the pre-Raphaelites, and writes that “much of the genius attacked by Nordau as degeneration was a sane and healthy expression of a vitality which, as it is not difficult to show, would have been better named regeneration.”<sup>99</sup> This points to the subjectivity inherent in perceptions of “degeneration” and “regeneration.” I will discuss Lawrence’s affinity with Jackson’s regenerative summation of the artistic movements of the 1890s in chapter 2.

David Trotter, citing both Lankester’s *Degeneration: a Chapter in Darwinism* and Nordau’s *Degeneration*, alerts us to the broad reach of contemporary degeneration theory, which included prophecies that western civilisation would collapse.<sup>100</sup> The central concern of degenerationists was that Darwin’s theory of evolution could be applied in reverse – the “descent” scenario, already discussed. In Britain, degeneration theories were circulating at a time when there were concerns that both the heart of the British Empire, London, and the colonial periphery, would be subject to a range of threatening forces stemming from within democratic industrial society, and from without. Greenslade points to contemporary concerns at the perceived “reproductive advantage” of the “vigorous but degenerate city-dweller.”<sup>101</sup> He identifies the emergence of an “urban-degeneration theory,” at the end of the nineteenth century, in response to the steady influx of healthy rural workers into the teeming and unhealthy cities. Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, who coined the term “eugenics,” in 1883, the science of improving humans through the manipulation of breeding, believed that “the struggle for existence was not improving the British race but spoiling it.”<sup>102</sup> For many, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth-century, Galton’s eugenics offered a now infamous solution to social ills. He asserted that superior sections of society should increase their breeding effort, while inferior ones should cease to reproduce.<sup>103</sup> I will return to this subject in the next chapter on regeneration. Bernard Porter points to the concern at the capacity of the British Empire to hold together which

<sup>97</sup> Holbrook Jackson, *The 1890s: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: The Cresset Library, 1988), p. 12.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 33.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>100</sup> David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895-1920* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 111-112.

<sup>101</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 42.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 113.

was expressed after the fall of Khartoum, in the Sudan, in 1885. He quotes from the *Statist* of February 1885, which deplored that “there is the danger that not only in Africa, not only in Asia, but throughout the world, the idea should take root that England is too weak or too indifferent to hold her own.”<sup>104</sup> Following the Boer War, concerns at the health of British society continued into the twentieth century with, for example, the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 to enquire into the health of the nation.<sup>105</sup> War stimulated anxieties which often worked to challenge the ideology of the conflict. Daniel Pick observes that “the language of degeneration, regression and atavism were [sic] to find, as it were, a new lease of life in the context of war, providing a continuing counterpoint to blithe, optimistic jingoism.”<sup>106</sup> Democratic and socialist movements, which attracted widespread attention and mass public rallies, were also the subject of anxiety because of their association with mob behaviour. “To enter the crowd was to regress, to return, to be thrown back upon a certain non-individuality,”<sup>107</sup> Pick observes.

Degeneration anxiety touched on nearly every discourse about the morals and directions of personal, social, and national life. It is not surprising, therefore, that it also entered modern novels, including those written by Lawrence.

### *Lawrence and Theories of Degeneration and Decline*

In the post-Darwin world degenerationist theories and theories of social decline shaped *fin-de-siècle* attitudes to race, gender and empire, and influenced assumptions about the destiny of white society and civilisation. These attitudes, although emerging in the late nineteenth century, continued well into the 1930s. In addition to Nordau and Spengler, Flinders Petrie and Friedrich Nietzsche propounded theories of decadence in civilisation, which may be linked to widespread anxiety about the health of industrial society. In addition to Spengler, Lawrence was familiar with Petrie and Nietzsche. Amongst novelists whom Lawrence admired, there are several who engage degenerationist themes, including H. G. Wells and E. M. Forster. It is important, therefore, to locate his work in the context of his wide

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<sup>104</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share* (Harlow: Longman, 1996), p. 116.

<sup>105</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 43.

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c1848-c1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 221.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

exposure to prevailing degenerationist theories and theories of cultural decadence. As William Greenslade observes, “historicising the text helps to reconstruct the effort writers make at writing within, alongside or, often, against the terms of discourse, consciously or unconsciously.”<sup>108</sup> “Historicising” of Lawrence’s work, I contend, reveals rich and diverse encounters with degenerationist theories, which were amongst the most pervasive ideologies of his time. In doing so, I will, however, seek to modify Greenslade’s overall assessment that Lawrence is not a degenerationist. Lawrence, like Nietzsche, through his belief in the possibility of social dissolution as a precursor to later renewal, may be seen as what we might call a “positive degenerationist.”

Nordau in *Degeneration* writes: “The effect of a large town on the human organism offers the closest analogy to that of the Maremma, and its population falls victim to the same fatality of degeneracy and destruction as the victims of malaria.”<sup>109</sup> Although not familiar with Nordau, there is early evidence that Lawrence saw the environment of cities in similarly degenerative, biological terms. This illustrates the persistence of degeneration theories into the early decades of the twentieth-century. On 9 October 1908 Lawrence wrote: “I have been to Stockport and Manchester, vile, hateful, immense, tangled, filthy places both, seething with strangers.” He saw the inhabitants as “races of insects running over some food body” (i. 80). It is, however, important to note Lawrence’s divergence from the kind of orthodox, moralistic degeneration theory propounded by Nordau several decades earlier. At the broadest level, as I have shown, Lawrence was in contest with Spencer and Darwin and would have challenged the Darwinian evolutionary assumptions which I have already shown are embedded in Nordau’s work. We may also point to the divergence in the authors’ attitudes to the perceived modern tendency towards neurasthenia. For Nordau neurasthenia constituted “the minor stages” of “degeneration and hysteria” and was primarily associated with decadence in the arts.<sup>110</sup> For Lawrence, as exemplified in *Kangaroo*, where the narrator asserts, somewhat esoterically, that “our neurasthenia and complexes” are because humanity has not listened to “the new suggestion” from “outside our universe” (K, 296:37-38, 11, 17), the cause is part of a more subtle psycho-social malaise. It is the product of the individual’s “inattention to the suggestion” from beyond (K, 296:38-39). Another distinction is important. Lawrence did not share Nordau’s

<sup>108</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 35.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

concern with the supposed decadence and degeneracy in the arts of the 1890s. Nordau's examples of degenerate artists included many whom Lawrence, like Holbrook Jackson, respected, such as Oscar Wilde and Walt Whitman. And clearly Lawrence embraced innovation in the arts. Unlike Nordau, for Lawrence, the way to social improvement lay beyond the "reform" of any one segment of society. There is a similar divergence in attitude towards Nietzsche, whom Nordau despised for his "false individualism and aristocratism."<sup>111</sup> Lawrence appears to have been attracted to Nietzsche's ideas about the desirability of social destruction as a positive and necessary precursor to regeneration, as articulated in his *Will to Power*. Theories of social destruction and re-birth were commonly articulated in the wake of Darwinism, and Anne Fernihough notes the wide influence in the early twentieth-century of Flinders Petrie's "cyclical theories" of growth and decay such as those found in his *Revolutions of Civilisation* (1911).<sup>112</sup> I will discuss the importance of Nietzsche and Petrie in chapter 6.

Fernihough also alerts us to Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* which was published in German in 1918, noting its impact on Western thought, including that of Lawrence:

The fact that it coincided with the final phases of the First World War accounted to a large extent for the startling impact it had on many of the leading philosophers of the day. Though many people disagreed violently with much of Spengler's thesis, no one could escape a sense of the timeliness of its gloomy prophesies. Lawrence himself was bound to feel the reverberations of this massively influential work, and indeed it is mentioned by its German title, almost in the same breath as Rilke, at the opening of *The First Lady Chatterley*, in direct connection with Clifford Chatterley, 'a smashed man',<sup>113</sup> whose physical paralysis, brought on by fighting in the war, is symbolic of a much deeper paralysis in society at large.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>112</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 25.

<sup>113</sup> D. H. Lawrence, quoted in Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 22.

<sup>114</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence, Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 22.

Fernihough points to the difficulty in ascertaining precisely when Lawrence first came into contact with Spengler's work. She suggests a possible influence of Spengler in Lawrence's recasting of Darwinian theory, which he utilised in evoking the cycle of creation and destruction in Aztec myths,<sup>115</sup> which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Fernihough speculates that while Lawrence might have been exposed to Spengler's theories during the period he worked on *Women in Love*, she rules out a "direct influence," noting, however, that there were a range of similar theories current and that Spengler's "imagery" was already part of the novel by 1918.<sup>116</sup>

Another, equally important source of degenerationist theories for Lawrence was literature. Literary criticism has, as early as 1940, and more particularly since the 1980s, shown that many English, American and Australian novels from the *fin de siècle* until at least the late 1930s actively engage or reflect ideas of degeneration. Major contributions in this field include Leo J. Henkin's *Darwinism in the English Novel* (1940), Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (1983), David Trotter's *The English Novel in History* (1993), William Greenslade's *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (1994), and Donald J Childs's *Modernism and Eugenics* (2001). The range of authors covered by these studies is extensive and includes canonical novelists such as George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Aldous Huxley, as well as Lawrence. Also included are less canonical authors such as H. Rider Haggard, Arnold Bennett, George Gissing, and Rudyard Kipling, who were major writers of their time, as well as a number of now obscure early twentieth century popular novelists.

As with non-fiction, Lawrence was remarkably well-read in works of literature. With the exception of Virginia Woolf, he was familiar with the works of his contemporary and near-contemporary authors noted above. George Eliot was the earliest to have read Darwin, and was reading *The Origin of Species* while completing *The Mill on the Floss* (1860).<sup>117</sup> *The Mill* was a favourite of Lawrence's (i. 88, n. 3), and part of his enjoyment would, it seems, have been his shared sympathy with Eliot's view of the limitations of scientific explanations of creation, including Darwin's, from the point of view of the artist. Eliot wrote that such explanations leave a "feeble impression compared with the mystery

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> A. S. Byatt, "Introduction," *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 17.

that lies under the processes.”<sup>118</sup> Lawrence read many of Conrad’s novels (*i.* 118), and read Forster’s *Howard’s End* (1910) by mid-1911, describing it as “exceedingly good” (*i.* 278). He later read *A Passage to India* (1924), which he also praised (*v.* 81). It is in H. G. Wells, however, whose early works Lawrence admired, that Lawrence found one of the most explicit and persistent encounters with Darwinism and degeneration of any of these writers. Leo Henkin notes that in *The Time Machine* (1895), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and *A Modern Utopia*, (1905), Wells is concerned with “the political application of Darwinism in a scathing attack on imperialism and nationalists.”<sup>119</sup> Greenslade notes Wells’s grasp of the revolutionary implications of Darwinism for the place of humans in nature, writing that Wells first “welcomed this complication in the assumed teleology of human progress” in his essay ‘Zoological Retrogression’ (1891), as well as asserting in his later fiction and journalism that “mankind’s hegemony over lower species and other planetary life cannot be taken for granted.”<sup>120</sup> In *The War of the Worlds*, which Lawrence had read by 1909,<sup>121</sup> Greenslade observes that the “intention and effect is to undermine the hegemony of mankind as a species”.<sup>122</sup> Lawrence regarded Wells’s *Tono-Bungay* (1909), as “a great book” (*i.* 127) and its theme of social and individual dissolution is manifest in the following summation of the condition of England towards the end of the novel by the narrator, who builds ships of war. England is in a season of decay:

It is all one spectacle of forces running to waste, of people who use and do not replace, the story of a country hectic with a wasting aimless fever of trade and money-making and pleasure-seeking. And now I build destroyers.

Other people may see this country in other terms; this is how I have seen it. In some early chapter in this heap I compared all our present colour and abundance to October foliage before the frosts nip down the leaves. That I still feel was a good image.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>118</sup> George Eliot, quoted in Byatt, “Introduction,” *The Mill on the Floss*, p. 17.

<sup>119</sup> Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel*, p. 262.

<sup>120</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>121</sup> Burwell, “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading,” p. 211.

<sup>122</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 34.

<sup>123</sup> H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), pp. 375-376.

Later still the narrator reports with less lyricism and greater pessimism: "Again and again I have written of England as a feudal scheme overtaken by fatty degeneration and stupendous accidents of hypertrophy" and that "men and nations, epochs and civilisations pass."<sup>124</sup>

Wells biologises the condition of England, likening it to a diseased body, as in fact Lawrence had done in his "Stockport" letter of 1908, referred to earlier.

An early example of Lawrence's engagement with degeneration is in "The Return Journey," an essay he had written by October 1915 (*DG*, 733). This essay grew out of his journey from Bavaria to Milan in September 1913 (*TI*, 247-248). Lawrence later corrected this essay between January and February 1916 (*TI*, lvii), along with the other essays which became *Twilight in Italy* (1916). It is Lawrence's deepening pessimism which is of interest here. In October 1913 Lawrence recalled his recent visit to the city of Milan: "Then I got to beastly Milano, with its imitation hedge-hog of a cathedral and its hateful town Italians all socks and purple cravats and hats over their ear, did for me" (*ii*. 88). This is the language of urban decadence and degeneration. The war served to deepen Lawrence's sense of revulsion at the degeneration evident in European society. Lawrence's 1916 revision of "The Return Journey" in proof stage was, as Paul Eggert notes, intended "to convey an even gloomier" picture (*TI*, lvii):

[...]I saw that here the life was still vivid, here the process of disintegration was vigorous, and centred in a multiplicity of mechanical activities that engage the human mind as well as the body. But always there was the same purpose stinking in it all, the mechanising, the perfect mechanising of human life. (*TI*, 226:35-39)

In "The Novel and The Feelings," written a decade later in November 1925 (*DG*, 553), Lawrence contests one of the received Social Darwinian assumptions that modern civilised humans are the acme of evolution: "After hundreds of thousands of years we have learned how to wash our faces and bob our hair, and that is about all we have learned, *individually*" (*STH*, 201:20-22). Humans are "tamed" like "horses" which are "still shut up in their fields, paddocks, corrals, stables," he writes (*STH*, 203:38, 204:1-3). Lawrence, therefore, issues a dire warning. Humanity must come to a fundamentally new

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp. 380, 382.



understanding of itself, or it will decline, although he acknowledges that the change will not occur in “five minutes” (*STH*, 204:9). He continues:

Yet, unless we proceed to connect ourselves up with our own primeval sources, we shall degenerate. And degenerating, we shall break up into a strange orgy of feelings. They will be decomposition feelings, like the colours of autumn. And they will precede whole storms of death, like leaves in a wind.

There is no help for it. Man cannot tame himself and then stay tame. The moment he tries to stay tame he begins to degenerate, and gets the second sort of wildness, the wildness of destruction, which may be autumnal-beautiful for a while, like yellow leaves. Yet yellow leaves can only fall and rot. (*STH*, 204:13-22)

Lawrence’s use of an autumnal metaphor for social degeneration is strikingly similar to Wells’s imagery of “October foliage” in *Tono-Bungay*, and may have its origin in Wells. For Lawrence, the solution to degeneration lies within the individual, “the old Adam” who has “God within the walls of himself”. One must be “listening inwards” to “the feelings that roam in the forests of the blood” (*STH*, 205:8, 13, 24-26). And if one cannot achieve this, one “can look to the real novels, and there listen in. Not listen to the didactic statements of the author, but to the low, calling cries of the characters, as they wander in the dark woods of their destiny” (*STH*, 205:34-36). This attitude accounts for the regenerative and questing elements found in most of Lawrence’s novels, which he employs in reaction to degenerative forces, and which I will examine in the next chapter.

Lawrence, however, is not always associated with ideas of degeneration. Greenslade, for example, while pointing to the ubiquitousness of degeneration theory, and the difficulty of avoiding either its language or assumptions, sees Lawrence as a primitivist rather than a degenerationist:

So pervasive and seductive was the terminology of degeneration in this period that it was all but impossible to avoid: writers could be forgiven for resorting to its terms, even though, in other respects, their work serves notice on the value of its typologies. D. H. Lawrence, who is not a

degenerationist but a primitivist, none the less keeps in circulation the small change of psychopathological diagnosis.<sup>125</sup>

Lawrence is a complex and contradictory writer. Some of his work indeed “serves notice” on the “typologies” of degeneration, or more precisely, the assumptions, and social and political prescriptions espoused by degenerationists, such as eugenics, which I will discuss in detail in chapter 2. Lawrence, however, also had frequent recourse to degenerationist images and assumptions. Lawrence, I argue, does much more than deal with the “small change” of degeneration anxieties. His absorption and articulation of degeneration theories is far more profound than Greenslade’s summation suggests. As I have shown, Lawrence, like Wells, articulated degenerationist anxieties. Importantly, degeneration, provided a discourse against which he was able to develop his own regenerative vision. Before exploring this further, I will examine Lawrence’s relation to primitivism, since this will also illustrate his deeper engagement with degenerationism.

As noted above, the challenge for Lawrence as he expressed it in “The Novel and The Feelings” is for humans “to connect,” not simply with the primitive, as Greenslade’s “primitivist” summation asserts, but with the “primeval.” We must, however, also acknowledge Lawrence’s interest in and engagement with primitive cultures as, for example, through his reading of contemporary studies in anthropology, notably Sir James Frazer whose works such as *The Golden Bough*, influenced a generation of modern authors.<sup>126</sup> We may also point to Lawrence’s incorporation of Native and Mexican Americans into his fiction, and his study of the less “primitive” ancient Etruscans in *Etruscan Places* (1932). It is a mistake, however, to characterise Lawrence as purely a primitivist. As with his engagement with Darwinism, Lawrence re-shapes the idea of the primitive to suit his own purpose. The term also suggests an uncritical nostalgia altogether eschewed by Lawrence. “We can’t go back. We can’t go back to the savages: not a stride,” he writes in *Studies of Classic American Literature* (SCAL, 127:22). Moreover, it is important to note that Lawrence extends the notion of degeneration beyond contemporary industrial society and applies it to primitive cultures as well. This would appear to be a uniquely Lawrentian perspective and is evident in the *Intermediate Version* of his first

<sup>125</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> Michael Bell, “Lawrence and Modernism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough, p. 181.

essay on Herman Melville. He asserts, after a swipe at scientific theories in general, that it is primitive races which have degraded further than those living a modern existence:

Of all childish things, science is one of the most childish and amusing. The savages, we may say *all* savages, are remnants of the once civilised world-people, who had their splendour and their being for countless centuries in the way of sensual knowledge, that conservative way in which Egypt shows us most plainly, mysterious and long-enduring. It is we from the north, starting new centres of life in ourselves, who have become young. The savages have grown older and older. No man can look at the African grotesque carvings, for example, or the decoration patterns of the Oceanic islanders, without seeing in them the infinitely sophisticated soul which produces distortion from its own distorted psyche, a psyche distorted through myriad generations of degeneration. No one can fail to see the quenched spark of a once superb understanding. (*SCAL*, 337:27-39)

Lawrence here rejects the received evolutionary logic of received Darwinism. He sees twentieth-century primitive cultures as having themselves degenerated from an earlier superior type. Lawrence's engagement with primitivism is, nonetheless, highly complex. Michael Bell observes that "Lawrence was at once the major modern primitivist and the most radical critic of primitivism,"<sup>127</sup> and this helps greatly to explain the shifts in attitude revealed in his work. Bell notes that in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* Lawrence

diagnosed some classic modern nostalgias; whether colonialist, as in the soldier Anton Skrebensky's exotic fascination with the 'strange darkness' of Africa (*R*, 413), or aesthetic, as in artist Loerke's interest in 'the West African wooden figures, the Aztec art, Mexican and Central American'. (*WL*, 448).<sup>128</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Bell, "Lawrence and Modernism," p. 181.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Also in *Women in Love*, however, Lawrence appears to celebrate the aesthetic perfection of a West African carving. Birkin, the Lawrence character, “in a state of nudity,” responding to “the carved figure of the negro woman in labour,” asserts that “it is art,” because “it conveys a complete truth” (*WL*, 78:26, 36-37, 40; 79:14). Mark Kinkead-Weekes observes that this reveals how Lawrence “was able to imagine how encounters with the cultures of other races might supply defects in himself and his civilisation.”<sup>129</sup> Lawrence certainly saw many defects in modern civilisation. The answer in *Women in Love*, however, is not to shed one’s clothes in rejection of civilisation – this is simply going native. Halliday, therefore, the collector of the primitive figure is, in *his* naked “broken beauty,” portrayed as “degenerate, slightly disintegrate,” and his wanting to roam the Amazon like a savage is rendered absurd (*WL*, 77:28, 34; 78:1-17). In a subtly different scene, however, still in Halliday’s modern lounge room, a group of naked men, which also includes Halliday, and importantly, the Lawrence character, Birkin, assumes a quiet, orderly dignity, and in their relation to the statue as “art,” represent a vital re-connection with something lost, rather than a collapse. The men assume a god-like perfection: “the Russian golden and like a water-plant, Halliday tall and heavily, brokenly beautiful, Birkin very white and immediate, not to be defined” (*WL*, 79:3-5). Lawrence draws a clear distinction between Halliday’s generalised, nostalgic yearning and, therefore, degenerate nudity, and the powerful, immediate and regenerative vitality of the naked men in the presence of the statue.

I have mentioned Lawrence’s praise for E. M. Forster’s *Howard’s End*, which he read in June 1911, finding it “exceedingly good and very discussible” (*i.* 278). Greenslade quotes the following passage from that novel as an expression of prevailing degenerationist fears, but surprisingly without regard to its possible impact on Lawrence:

One guessed him as the third generation grandson to the shepherd or ploughboy whom civilization had sucked into the town; as one of the thousands who have lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes, “Decolonising Imagination: Lawrence in the 1920s,” in Anne Fernihough, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, p. 67.

<sup>130</sup> E. M. Forster, quoted in Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 41.

The resonances in two of Lawrence's early novels are apparent. In *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* Lawrence articulates a similar anxiety at the degenerative effects of urban life, compared with the presumed healthy life of the country. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence portrays industrialisation and democracy as sicknesses causing physical and psychic harm to England. The new coal town of Wiggiston is seen to be swallowing up "healthy, half agricultural country" and as "a red-brick confusion rapidly spreading like a skin disease" (R, 320:12, 34-35). Ursula's vision of this new world is quietly apocalyptic. She "saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away" (R, 459:5-7). Birkin believes that "humanity itself is dry-rotten" (WL, 126:10). Again, as in *The Rainbow*, the novel wills the Nietzschean destruction of contemporary society rather than prescribing a cure. Birkin tells Ursula: "It could go, and there would be no absolute loss, if every human being perished tomorrow" (WL, 127:15-17). Lawrence, although never a Darwinist, utilises Wellsian Darwinian imagery in his pessimistic vision of modern society. Birkin asserts: "If only man was swept off the face of the earth, creation would go on so marvellously, with a new start, non-human. Man is one of the mistakes of creation—like the ichthyosauri" (WL, 128:15-17). David Trotter observes that Lawrence "invokes degeneration theory" in *Women in Love*,<sup>131</sup> and sees Gudrun's regenerative quest as clashing with Gerald Crich's degenerative trajectory in the novel. He suggests that there is a "fundamental incompatibility between the degeneration-plot and the regeneration-plot."<sup>132</sup> Lawrence, however, surely sees this polarity as fundamental to his purpose. Gerald's and Gudrun's relationship fails, and without the tension of this polarity, the novel would be gutted, and there could be no assertion of a regenerative future. As David Glover observes: "The regeneration narrative, often paired with a parallel and cautionary story of degeneracy" was a feature of novels by Lawrence, as well as Bram Stoker and E. M. Forster.<sup>133</sup> And, as Roger Ebbatson notes: "The death-scene dramatises Nordau's thesis that western civilisation suffered from fatigue which led to degeneration and hysteria."<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Lawrence worked out an elaborate philosophy of oppositional forces during the war in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, which he referred to as "a sort of Confessions of my Heart" (ii. 235). In *Study* he writes that "life consists in the dual form of

<sup>131</sup> David Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 192.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>133</sup> David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 133.

<sup>134</sup> Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self*, p. 103.

the Will-to-Motion and the Will-to-Inertia" (*STH*, 59:3), that humanity must "reconcile" both "Law" and "Love" (*STH*, 123:8), and that "Man and Woman are, roughly, the embodiment of Love and Law" (*STH*, 127:11). Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes, in the context of *The Rainbow*, the centrality of conflict between oppositions in Lawrence's world view: "The whole inner history of mankind, visible in religion and art, is continual variation on the eternal dialectic. Conflict is vital."<sup>135</sup> The subtlety of this dialectic, however, is apparent in *Women in Love*. Colin Clarke observes: "The degenerate world which Birkin so reviles is beautiful as well as foul, and much of the novel is a haunting celebration of this beauty. The social decay, furthermore, is a potential source of life."<sup>136</sup> And, as Anne Fernihough observes, the apparent polarities of "Crich's materialism and Hermione's idealism" are presented by the narrator as being "two sides of the same coin."<sup>137</sup> Finally, Hugh Stevens's observation that in *Women in Love* Lawrence "amply avails himself of the vocabulary of degeneration, decadence and eugenics and turns the logic of the discourses on its head,"<sup>138</sup> can be applied more generally to Lawrence's fiction, including his Australian work.

*The Rainbow* and even more so, *Women in Love*, illustrate not only Lawrence's deep pessimism about the state of England during World War I, and his overwhelming pessimism towards the world at large at that time, but also his hopes for the future. Ursula, lapsing into a reverie, considers: "There was nothing to look for from life – it was the same in all countries and all peoples" (*WL*, 193:18-19). Lawrence admitted to being frightened by *Women in Love*, but he acknowledged the centrality of the tension between its essentially Nietzschean combination of degenerative and regenerative elements: "It is so end-of-the-world. But it is, it must be, the beginning of a new world too," he wrote in November 1916 (*iii*. 25-26). This brings us to Lawrence's conception of what that "new world" might look like, and his vision of regeneration.

<sup>135</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Introduction," *The Rainbow*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Mark Kinkead-Weekes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xxxiii.

<sup>136</sup> Colin Clarke, *River of Dissolution: D. H. Lawrence and English Romanticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. xi.

<sup>137</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Hugh Stevens, "Sex and Nation: 'The Prussian Officer' and *Women in Love*," in Anne Fernihough, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, p. 61.

## 2. LAWRENCE AND REGENERATION: THE REJECTION OF EUGENICS, THE QUEST FOR RANANIM IN “THE NEWEST COUNTRY”

The corollary to degenerationist anxiety in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a series of countervailing reformist and rejuvenating visions, policies and attitudes conveniently called “regeneration.” Central to regeneration was the desire to improve the physical and mental health of the individual, and society. William Greenslade, in reporting the widespread anxiety at the health of the British nation in the early twentieth century observes that “the qualification for membership of the Edwardian nation turned evermore insistently on the evidence of reproductive ‘fitness,’ which resulted in “a policy of social imperialism,” which centred “around the idea of ‘national efficiency.’”<sup>1</sup> This mood is exemplified by the 1904 “Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration,” which cited urban poverty and pollution as causes of declining health in the British population.<sup>2</sup> Attitudes to health reform, emigration, empire, socialism, psychology, literature, and the role of women, reflected efforts to ensure the regeneration of the British race. It is in this context, as Greenslade also points out, that the eugenics movement arose, with which Lawrence has been associated, but which I will argue, he opposed. Against this multitude of regenerative impulses and objectives which circulated in the first decades of the twentieth century, and in reaction to the unfolding horror of World War I, Lawrence developed his own personal regenerative vision. At the core is his assertion of the need to regenerate human physicality, rather than mentality, which stemmed from his belief that the modern human spirit has been over developed at the expense of “the flesh [which] has been starved” (ii. 102). The war, for Lawrence, was the supreme assault on “the flesh.” In “With the Guns” he wrote that the war would be “an affair entirely of machines, with men attached to the machines as the subordinate part thereof, as the butt is the part of a rifle” (TI, 81:18-19). It was this mechanisation which horrified Lawrence, as much as the war itself. His response was to construct a regenerative, utopian community – his “Rananim,” which he sought to establish in a variety of locations including Cornwall, America, and the South Pacific. Australia too, emerged as a regenerative site for Lawrence and, although not explicitly identified as a possible Rananim, the ideal community he depicts in *The Boy in*

<sup>1</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

*the Bush* has all the hallmarks of Rananim and must be viewed as part of that vision. And his uncle had emigrated to Australia. Lawrence initially had high hopes for the regenerative possibilities of the young British society in Australia, a land Somers in *Kangaroo* refers to as “the newest country: young Australia!” (K, 13:38).

As with his engagement with degeneration, Lawrence’s vision of regeneration, although highly personal, can also be located in the wider context of contemporary ideas about social regeneration. Lawrence, while motivated by many of the same concerns as degenerationists, and frequently utilised degenerationist language and imagery, rejected mainstream economic, social and political prescriptions for the regeneration of society. Typically these relied on Darwinist assumptions of improvement and progress. Lawrence did not, for example, support major social movements of his day. “It is no use adhering to that old ‘advanced’ crowd – Cambridge, Lowes Dickinson, Bertie Russell, young reformers, socialists, Fabians – they are our disease, not our hope. We want a clean sweep, and a new start,” he wrote in the middle of the war (iii. 49). Lawrence did have a brush with this “crowd.” He formed an alliance with Russell, but their respective visions ultimately diverged.

### *Regeneration of the British Race*

There was a range of discourses which articulated ideas of regeneration. David Trotter notes the emergence of regenerative themes in the rhetoric of British imperialism, psychology, history, and colonial literature. He observes that:

Twenty years of degeneration theory had prepared the educated public for its diagnosis of a nation in decline. Its vision of imperial regeneration was over-ambitious in political terms, but compelling, and susceptible to endless reproduction in popular culture.<sup>3</sup>

Emigration was a palpable demonstration of hopes for personal improvement by those living in and near Britain. Between 1870 and 1900, around 7 million people emigrated from the British Isles, and although not all of this was within the empire, a great proportion

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<sup>3</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, pp. 142-143.



of it was – notably to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.<sup>4</sup> This massive diaspora is reflected in many of Lawrence’s novels –including both his first and last. In the *White Peacock*, Mr Saxton considers emigrating to Canada (*WP*, 200:40), and in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Constance and Mellors consider Australia and South Africa (*LC*, 215:35, 39). Lord Curzon captures the regenerative ideological dimension to emigration, which for most people was a largely economic decision, in his *Frontiers* (1907):

I am one of those who hold that in this larger atmosphere, on the outskirts of Empire, where the machine is relatively impotent and the individual is strong, is to be found an ennobling and invigorating stimulus for our youth, saving them alike from the corroding ease and the morbid excitements of Western Civilisation.<sup>5</sup>

Not all emigration, however, was regarded as regenerative, particularly to the tropics. Nancy Stepan reports the emergence of a “racial biology” which by “mid-nineteenth century had become a science of boundaries between groups and the degeneration that threatened when those boundaries were transgressed.”<sup>6</sup> Drawing on the work of the American sociologist, William Ripley and his *The Races of Europe* (1899), Stepan concludes that the “implicit message seemed to be that the Anglo-Saxon’s very refinement required the greatest physical, social and sexual distance from the peoples they increasingly governed abroad.”<sup>7</sup> Lawrence articulates similar fears, that in the tropics, Europeans might disintegrate. He wrote to Koteliansky from Ceylon:

It seems to me the life drains away from one here. The old people here say just the same: they say it is the natives that drain the life out of one, and that’s how it seems to me. One could quite easily sink into a kind of apathy, like a lotus on a muddy pond, indifferent to anything. (*iv*. 228)

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> Lord Curzon, quoted in Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Stepan, “Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places,” in Chamberlin and Gilman, eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

In literature, regeneration emerged, notably in the fiction of Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard in England, and Owen Wister in America, and Trotter notes that a “vision of a racially homogeneous Anglo-Saxon empire united Kipling, Haggard, [Theodore] Roosevelt, and Wister.”<sup>8</sup> Lawrence appears to have enjoyed some of Kipling, informing the publisher Charles Lahr in March 1929: “What a nice windfall of an old Kipling book” (vii. 198, n. 1) – the title is unknown. Lawrence refers to Haggard’s *She* (1887) in *Kangaroo* (K, 132:8). Lawrence, however, can not be linked with the visions of British imperial power expressed by these authors. Rather, we may link him with doubts about the British Empire such as those expressed by E. M. Forster. In *A Passage to India* (1924) Forster exposes the petty jealousies and paranoias of British colonial India, and the Indian Muslim protagonist, Assiz, proclaims at the conclusion of the novel that the British must “clear out” of India.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence respected Forster and agreed with his “repudiation of our white bunk” in the novel (v. 143).

In the explicitly sexual drawings of Aubrey Beardsley we can identify a liberating and regenerative influence on Lawrence. Holbrook Jackson in *The 1890s*, in a rebuttal of Nordau’s degenerationist appraisal of that decade, devotes a chapter to Beardsley, and describes him as inventing “a sort of phallic symbolism.”<sup>10</sup> In *The White Peacock* Lawrence’s treatment of Beardsley provides evidence of Beardsley’s impact. “Reproductions of Aubrey Beardsley’s ‘Atlanta’, and of the tail-piece to ‘Salomé,’” have a catalytic effect on Cyril, the somewhat prudish Lawrence-like protagonist, who reports: “My soul leaped out upon the new thing,” and on George, who is stimulated to proclaim his blunt sexual “want” for Lettie, ahead of his desire to marry her (WP, 159:4-5, 160:14). Lawrence’s interest in the phallus as a regenerative symbol is well-known. In *Kangaroo*, Somers explains to Ben Cooley his belief that “the phallic self” is superior to the “spirit” (K, 135:13, 20).

Lawrence was also exposed to ideas of regeneration through the work of William James. Trotter observes that “behind James’s functional psychology lay a conviction that the West was in decline.”<sup>11</sup> James’s perspective, therefore, was that of a degenerationist, and he developed his own vision of regeneration in response. For James, Trotter notes: “Identity was regeneration. Becoming yourself meant breaking through the inveterate

<sup>8</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 156.

<sup>9</sup> E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 316.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson, *The 1890s*, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 144.

habits which defined you as you were and becoming another person.”<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, articulates a vision of the centrality of selfhood which appears to draw on James. “Let every man take his own, and go his own way, regardless of system and State” he writes (*STH*, 38:32-33), and: “Your business is to produce your own real life, no matter what the nations do” (*STH*, 39:7-8). It is not clear exactly which of James’s works Lawrence read. Burwell, relying on Jessie Chambers’s account of his pre-war reading, identifies *Pragmatism* (1907), *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and probably *A Pluralistic Universe* (1907), as well as *The Principles of Psychology* written in 1890.<sup>13</sup> Burwell also notes the contradiction in Lawrence’s own account of his reading of James.<sup>14</sup> He told Koteliensky in a letter of 30 April 1919, that he had not read “Wm James Religious Experiences,” adding, revealingly: “He’s an interesting man” (*iii*. 355). Lawrence’s interest in James, we may surmise, would have included what Trotter refers to as James’s exploration of “the regenerative powers of love.”<sup>15</sup> Lawrence wrote famously: “But I shall always be a priest of love” (*i*. 493), and less pompously, after arriving in Cornwall early in the war: “One must be free to love, only to love and create” (*ii*. 491).

The establishment of the Boy Scouts was an example of British efforts at regeneration, and contrasts markedly with Lawrence’s vision. The movement reflects both Britain’s idea of itself as an imperial power, and its sense of the urgency to maintain its fitness to perform that role. Boy Scouts were established in 1907, and in 1908, the founder, Lord Baden-Powell, began to publish *Scouting for Boys*.<sup>16</sup> His conception of the movement was shaped by his experience of service in the British Empire. Recalling his army career Baden-Powell writes: “I had endless fun big-game hunting in the jungles in India and Africa and living among the backwoodsmen in Canada. Then I got real scouting in South African campaigns.”<sup>17</sup> Baden-Powell celebrates the work of the trail-blazers of new world societies in his definition of a scout: “The pioneers and trappers of North and South America, the hunters of Central Africa, the explorers and missionaries in all parts of the world, the bushmen and drovers of Australia—all these are peace scouts, real *men* in every

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Burwell, “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading,” pp. 206, 213, 257.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>15</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, n. d.), pp. 270-271.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.viii.

sense of the word.”<sup>18</sup> He praises contemporary exponents of white race empire and manliness such as Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>19</sup> He asserts the virtues of an outdoor life over the perceived softness of urban civilisation. Baden-Powell writes: “The great difference between bushmen and a stay-at-home city-dweller is, that the first is in shirt-sleeves while the other is buttoned up in his coat.”<sup>20</sup> In *Kangaroo* Lawrence registers the existence of scouts in Australia. Somers’s wife Harriett is full of admiration for the Australian variety:

Nothing would have kept her indoors when she heard a trumpet, not six wild Somerses. It was some very spanking Boy Scouts marching out. There were only six of them, but the road was hardly big enough to hold them.—Harriett leaned on the gate in admiration of their dashing broad hats and thick calves. (*K*, 17:8-12)

This is Harriett’s (and perhaps Frieda Lawrence’s) early view of a young and healthy Australian manhood. However Somers, the Lawrence character, has a different view of manliness. Soon after the scout scene, he scoffs at the “manliness” of the Australian Jack Callcott, and the narrator observes wryly that “it takes more than “manliness” to make a man” (*K*, 38:28-30).

### *Lawrence’s Rejection of Eugenics and Fitness*

The eugenics movement neatly encapsulates the Edwardian obsession with fitness. Its appeal was predicated on the twin assumptions of British and European superiority, and fears that European civilisation was degenerating. And eugenics has a close link not only with Darwinism, but Darwin himself. At the First International Eugenics Conference, held at the University of London in July 1912, Charles Darwin’s son, Leonard Darwin, delivered the presidential address, stating that:

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 38.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[...]if we confine our view within a narrower horizon, and if we look merely at our own form of civilisation, the history of the past affords us no right whatever to prophecy a continued improvement in the lot of our race in the immediate future[...]. Indeed many circumstances brought to light in recent investigations ought to force us to consider whether the progress of western civilisation is not now at a standstill and, indeed, whether we are not in danger of an actual retrograde movement.<sup>21</sup>

The term “eugenics” was coined by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin’s, in a work entitled *Inquiries into the Human Faculty* published in 1883, and he defined its purpose as to give “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.”<sup>22</sup> Galton was building on ideas he had first put forward in the mid 1860s which were consolidated in his *Hereditary Genius* published in 1869.<sup>23</sup> Galton was born in 1822 and his hour came late in life. Greenslade notes that H. G. Wells attended “Francis Galton’s address to the Sociological Society (founded June 1903) in which Galton placed ‘eugenics’ squarely on the ideological agenda of Edwardian regeneration.”<sup>24</sup> In April 1909, *The Eugenics Review* commenced publication as a quarterly, under the auspices of The Eugenics Education Society, and Galton wrote the Foreword. Galton became an esteemed contributor and an editorial in the *Review* noted proudly his receiving a knighthood.<sup>25</sup> In his Foreword Galton explained that *The Eugenics Review* would seek to “place Eugenic thought, where, possible, on a strictly scientific basis” as well as asserting that:

It will be the aim of the Managers of the *Review* to invite co-operation of independent observers, and to demonstrate the bearing of Eugenics on legislation and practical conduct. The field is very wide and varied. To those who carefully explore it the direct conflict of Eugenics with some of the social customs of the day will be unexpectedly revealed, whilst its

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<sup>21</sup> *Problems in Eugenics: First International Eugenics Congress* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Galton, quoted in Daniel K. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), preface, n. p.

<sup>23</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Galton in *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 1 April 1909-January 1910, p. 65.

complete harmony with other social customs will be unexpectedly made clear.<sup>26</sup>

The first issue of *The Eugenics Review* also clarified definitional issues of concern to the eugenics movement, notably its understanding of positive and negative eugenics. It reported that Dr C. W. Saleeby, in a recent address, had “pointed out that Positive Eugenics – the encouragement of parenthood on the part of the worthy – and Negative Eugenics – its discouragement on the part of the unworthy – were one and the same principle, since selection involved rejection.”<sup>27</sup> Articles on major areas of concern such as alcoholism, feeble-mindedness and syphilis, explained that those affected should not be permitted to marry, thereby illustrating how negative eugenics would apply. Of alcoholics Montague Crackanthorpe wrote that “not until such persons can show a clean bill of health should they be allowed to propagate their kind, under the sanction of either the law or the Church.”<sup>28</sup> Crackanthorpe argued that “it is as important that the right people should be born as that the wrong people should not be born” but conceded that “Positive Eugenics” was “less practicable than Negative Eugenics.”<sup>29</sup> By “the right people” he explained was meant, “not those who, in Herbert Spencer’s phrase, are ‘the fittest to survive’, but those who give most promise of ‘civic worth.’”<sup>30</sup> Any sense that Crackanthorpe, in rejecting the extreme survivalism of Spencer, might have had a truly humane view of humanity is dispelled by his clarification that the survivors of a recent Sicilian earthquake provided “no evidence of their worth to the State.”<sup>31</sup> Opposition to eugenics was also recorded in *The Eugenics Review* as, for example, in its defence of an attack published on 13 March 1909 in *The Nation* entitled “The Danger of Eugenics.”<sup>32</sup> Amongst writers, both Chesterton and Joyce, consistent with the prevailing Roman Catholic position, expressed opposition to eugenics.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, eugenics had not only entered popular discussion in Britain,<sup>34</sup> but had captured the minds of many British

<sup>26</sup> Francis Galton in *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 1 April 1909-January 1910, pp. 1-2

<sup>27</sup> C.W. Saleeby in *The Eugenics Review*, Vol. 1 April 1909-January 1910, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Montague Crackanthorpe in *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 1 April 1909-January 1910, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Donald J. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, p. 57.

writers and intellectuals as well, notably Fabian Socialists including G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells.<sup>35</sup>

Leo Henkin observes that “authors of the Wellsian prophetic habit of mind almost unanimously endowed their Utopias with some system of eugenics.”<sup>36</sup> While Lawrence was familiar with many of Wells’s novels, he appears not to have read either *A Modern Utopia* (1905) or *Joan and Peter* (1918), which Henkin cites for their conspicuous support for eugenics.<sup>37</sup> Lawrence did, however, read novels by other authors noted by Henkin for their advocacy of eugenics, including *The Egoist* (1879) by George Meredith (*STH*, 210:24), and Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), whose “false wrappers” were used in the Orioli edition of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928) (vi. 561). Lawrence does not, however, in any of his commentaries on these novels, address their eugenic elements.

With the exception of Donald J. Childs, whom I will discuss shortly, critics have not associated Lawrence with eugenics. The word is absent from the indexes to the three volume Cambridge biography and the eight-volume Cambridge edition of his letters. I can’t recall the word in any of his non-fiction or his poetry. Lawrence was not a member of the Eugenics Education Society, and there is no evidence that he ever read *The Eugenics Review*.<sup>38</sup> In *The Lost Girl* (1920), however, we find the following revealing passage which makes clear Lawrence’s awareness of, and importantly, disdain for eugenics and the social reformist zealots with which it was commonly associated. Mr May recounts to the novel’s protagonist Alvina Houghton, the horrors of life with his former wife, a vegetarian, a Fabian and a eugenicist:

‘Oh!—’ he turned his eyes to heaven, and spread his hands. ‘I didn’t believe my senses. I didn’t believe such people existed. And her friends! Oh the dreadful friends she had—these Fabians! Oh, their eugenics. They wanted to examine my private morals, for eugenic reasons.—Oh, you can’t imagine such a state! Worse than the Spanish Inquisition—and I stood it for three years.—How I stood it, I don’t know—.’ (*LG*, 103:19-25)

<sup>35</sup> George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel*, p. 262.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> *The Eugenics Review* is not mentioned in Burwell’s “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading.”

It is likely that Lawrence had been familiar with eugenics well before he wrote *The Lost Girl*. Peter Fjågesund notes in his study of Lawrence that “even a socialist weekly like *The New Age*, which Lawrence read regularly during 1908 and 1909, contained in the summer of 1908 some fifteen major articles on the necessity of eugenics.”<sup>39</sup> Later, in 1915, Lawrence saw a little of Monica and Mary Saleeby, the estranged wife and the daughter of Dr. C. W. Saleeby, (ii. 340, 345). Saleeby, as noted above, had published in the first edition of *The Eugenics Review*. Lawrence tutored the daughter, and it is possible that he had further exposure to eugenics at this time.

Donald J. Childs provides detailed and convincing evidence of the importance of eugenicist beliefs in the writing of modernists such as Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, and W. B. Yeats. While noting the existence of “a host of literary dissenters of eugenics,” such as Joyce, he also suggests that a fuller account of eugenics in the literature of this period would also include Lawrence, Shaw, Wells, Bennett and Huxley.<sup>40</sup> In light of the satirical diatribe against eugenics delivered by Mr May in *The Lost Girl*, Childs’s suggestion that Lawrence was a negative eugenicist, and apparently an extreme one, is *prima facie* problematic, and needs careful scrutiny. Childs hints at what “the fuller account” might find in regard to Lawrence. He refers to a passage in a letter Lawrence wrote in 1908 as a “plan of extermination for society’s outcasts” and furthermore, argues that evidence for the endurance of these sentiments is apparent in a late essay “Return to Bestwood” (1926), concluding, therefore, that Lawrence is as “extreme in his negative eugenics as Shaw and Wells.”<sup>41</sup> Here is the extract from the letter as quoted by Childs:

If I had my way, I would build a lethal chamber as big as the Crystal Palace, with a military band playing softly, and a Cinematograph working brightly; then I’d go out in the back streets and main streets and bring them in, all the sick, the halt, and the maimed; I would lead them gently, and they would smile me a weary thanks; (i. 81)

There is a disturbing quality to the passage, but it is somewhat surreal and is it eugenic? The first issue here is contextual. In his biography of Lawrence, John Worthen, in

<sup>39</sup> Peter Fjågesund, *The Apocalyptic World of D. H. Lawrence* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1991), p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics*, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.



reproducing the same part of the letter, reproduces the complete paragraph (*TEY*, 206). Importantly the paragraph begins: “Concerning Daisy Lord, I am entirely in agreement with you,” before continuing with: “If I had my way...” (*i.* 81). Daisy Lord had murdered her illegitimate child and was eventually executed (*i.* 81, and *n.* 2). In part, therefore, Lawrence is expressing a view about capital punishment. But what about the “lethal chamber?” This repulsive term appears to have had some currency. The first edition of *The Eugenics Review* sought to dispel what it saw as misconceptions about eugenics held by the wider community. *The Review* believed that “misstatement by friends, as when lethal chambers were commended, or infant mortality approved as eugenic (e.g. by Prof Flinders Petrie),” harmed the cause of eugenics, adding that “eugenics proposed to kill nobody” and intended only to “distinguish between (repulsive as it still is) right to live and right to propagate.”<sup>42</sup> If Lawrence’s sentiments are not, in the terms of eugenicists themselves “eugenic” the passage can still appear disturbing. Worthen sees Lawrence’s position in the Crystal Palace passage as “callow” and as “revealing the precariousness of his own sense of class superiority” in the face of his new experience of the seemingly intractable urban poverty of his school students (*EY*, 205-206). He does not, however, identify a eugenic flavour in the letter. Rather, he considers that Lawrence may also be striking “a pose” (*EY*, 206). This points to Lawrence the imaginative artist at work in this passage, which is further indicated when we consider the crucial last words of the passage, also omitted by Childs:<sup>43</sup> “And the band would softly bubble out the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’” (*i.* 81). My contention here is that, with this final phrase, Lawrence, if he has not in fact already done so with his “military band playing softly, and a Cinematograph working brightly,” has slipped, at this point, into parody, jocularly appropriating the popular discourse on eugenics, and satirising the material achievements which form the usual contents of the Crystal Palace. Lawrence’s informal musings in his letter are not, therefore, the sentiments of a eugenicist. In stark contrast, we must note G. B. Shaw’s clearly eugenic approach to marriage published by the Sociological Society: “What we must fight for is freedom to breed the race without being hampered by the mass of irrelevant conditions implied in the institution of marriage.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 1, April 1909-January 1910, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics*, pp. 12, 10.

<sup>44</sup> G. B. Shaw, quoted in Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birth Rate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 67-68.

The second piece of evidence for Lawrence's eugenic beliefs put forward by Childs is contained in a passage from Lawrence's essay "Return to Bestwood" written in 1926.<sup>45</sup> Lawrence writes: "I know we must look after the quality of life, not the quantity. Hopeless life should be put to sleep, the idiots and the hopeless sick and the true criminal. And the birth-rate should be controlled" (*P II*, 265). This is strong stuff and no parody. It is not, however, eugenics. Lawrence is not seeking to limit the offspring of certain classes of people or manipulate unions between men and women with a view to producing superior progeny, the stated aim of eugenicists. His suggestion that "the hopeless sick and the true criminal" be "put to sleep," repugnant as it is, is also advocated by supporters of euthanasia and capital punishment respectively, without any connection to eugenics. His prescriptions for "idiots" as he calls them, is truly repulsive and deserves no further explication. Is this simply hair-splitting? Is there not a eugenic tang to Lawrence? I suggest that, while there is a eugenic flavour to this passage, there is no eugenic substance to the essay as a whole. The passage sits asymmetrically alongside the essay's overall vision. Lawrence asserts that "we must have a new conception of what it means *to live*" and that "man...with his soul...must search for the sources of the power of life" (*P II*, 265). For Lawrence, therefore, the problem, or we might say the sickness of humanity lies deep within the soul of individuals, and not in the bodies of criminals or less fortunate members of society. Lawrence's callous references in this essay, repugnant as they are, do not provide evidence of his belief in eugenics. Moreover, there are important reasons why Lawrence did not subscribe to eugenicist regenerative visions of society.

Lawrence's interest in the work of William James provided him with a very different regenerative frame. John Worthen sees James's doctrine of "pragmatism," expressed in *Pragmatism* (1907), as well as the pluralism espoused in that work and in two other works, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), as greatly appealing to Lawrence, as a "way of attacking idealism, absolutism and Monism" (*EY*, 180). Lawrence wrote in 1909 to his former botany lecturer, Ernest Smith, thanking him for directing him "out of a torturing crude Monism, past Pragmatism, into a sort of crude but appealing Pluralism" (*i.* 146, n. 7, 147). Eugenics is the reverse of pluralism. And it is pure racial idealism. Not surprisingly therefore, James's notion of

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<sup>45</sup> Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics*, p. 10.

pluralism was reviled in *The Eugenics Review*, where F.C.S. Schiller quotes contemptuously from James's *A Pluralistic Universe*:

Everything is smothered in the litter that is fated to accompany it. Without too much, you cannot have enough of anything. Lots of inferior books, lots of bad statues, lots of dull speeches, of tenth-rate men and women, as a condition of the few precious specimens in either kind being realised. The gold dust comes to birth with the quartz sand all around it.<sup>46</sup>

Schiller concludes, jeeringly with: "True, most true; but is it anything even a philosopher could call rational? Surely the world must contain also contrivances for ridding itself of the superfluity of rubbish it engenders."<sup>47</sup>

Nancy Stepan observes that eugenics is "the ultimate biological theory of racial degeneration and regeneration," and identifies its link with Darwinism:

Since civilisation was believed to prevent the operation of natural selection, which in the normal course of events eliminated degenerate individuals and stocks, the only solution, according to the eugenicists, was to prevent the over production of degenerates by segregation and sterilisation of the 'unfit'.<sup>48</sup>

If we recall Lawrence's rejection of Darwinism, we find further explanation of why Lawrence did not support eugenics as a pathway to regeneration. In the previous chapter I noted Anne Fernihough's observation, drawing on the work of Gillian Beer, that Lawrence rejects both the "optimistic and pessimistic" elements inherent in Darwinism because they both result in "a subordination of the present, of individual lives at any given time, to narrative,"<sup>49</sup> and that this helps explain not only Lawrence's attitude to Darwinism, but also his attitude to contemporary ideas of regeneration. Fernihough and Beer point to the way Darwinism has been "misappropriated politically" such as through the "eugenic argument

<sup>46</sup> William James, quoted in F. C. S. Schiller in *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 2, April 1910- January 1911, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> F. C. S. Schiller in *The Eugenics Review* Vol. 2 April 1910-January 1911, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Stepan, "Biological Degeneration," p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, 177.

of Nazism,”<sup>50</sup> and Fernihough notes Lawrence’s distrust of the selectivity of Darwinism and his lament that contemporary culture had presided over what he termed “the death of the body.”<sup>51</sup> While Fernihough does not comment directly on Lawrence’s position on eugenics, importantly, she observes that Lawrence’s rejection of Darwinism was because of its “linking of evolutionary narrative with a devaluing of the body.”<sup>52</sup> And this is the clue to Lawrence’s rejection of eugenics. Eugenics is the ultimate devaluation of humanity, and most obviously, the human body. For Lawrence, the body was sacred. Interference with the body was a profanity.

The health of the body, however, was central to eugenic thought, and this was deeply problematic for Lawrence. He was plagued by ill-health for most of his adult life, and was a poor candidate for the eugenics movement. He was himself one of the Edwardian “unfit.” John Worthen describes 1911 as “the sick year” (*EY*, 288), in which Lawrence was seriously ill with pneumonia, resulting in the end of his teaching career, and was aware of the threat of consumption (*i.* 337). With the coming of the war Lawrence was forced to submit to a series of military health inspections for the greater part of the conflict so that his “fitness” could be monitored. The intensity with which he describes this experience demonstrates the depth of his sense of physical and moral outrage when he was in the hands of the wartime military authorities. In December 1915 Lawrence presented at “a recruiting station[...]to be attested and to get a military exemption” but he grew impatient and left (*ii*, 474). In June 1916, after receiving an exemption from military service, he wrote scathingly of the whole process of induction into military life and the assessment of fitness. It was a devaluing of the body:

The ignominy is horrible, the humiliation. And even this terrible glamour of camaraderie, which is the glamour of Homer and of all militarism, is a decadence, a degradation, a losing of individual form and distinction, a merging in a sticky male mess. It attracts one for a moment, but immediately, what a degradation and a prison, oh intolerable. I could not bear it – I should die in a week if they made me a soldier. Thirty men, in

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> D. H. Lawrence, quoted in Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence and Aesthetics*, p. 177.

<sup>52</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 178.

their shirts, being weighed like sheep, one after the other – God! They have such impossible feet. (ii. 618)

This letter amply records Lawrence revulsion at the sorting of human beings for the purpose of killing. Significantly, Lawrence uses the language of degeneration to describe the military's quest for fitness. The "decadence" and "degradation," not only reflect on the individual, but on the entire military project prosecuting the war. Ironically, the army medical inspection process worked in his favour and Lawrence was pronounced unfit for military service. In eugenic terms Lawrence was of poor physical stock.

The extent of the outrage Lawrence felt towards his military experience is recorded in the highly autobiographical chapter "The Nightmare" in *Kangaroo*, where the narrator goes into forensic detail about the subtle gradations of military fitness. At the first inspection, Richard Somers is "rejected as medically unfit" (K, 214:24). At the second inspection, he receives a card:

It was one of those cards: A. Called up for military service. B. Called up for service at the front, but not in the lines. C. Called up for non-military service. R. Rejected. A, B, and C were ruled out in red ink, leaving the Rejected. (K, 220:8-11)

The detail here is extraordinary, given that Lawrence penned it in Australia, many years after the events. At the third inspection, Somers is admitted to a new class of fitness: "He was put in class C.3. – Unfit for military service, but conscripted for light non-military duties" (K, 231:8-9). At the final inspection, Somers has his eyes tested and is checked for "physical deformity" (K, 253:7,10), and we find the grossly invasive scene in which a "chemist assistant puppy" who assists the doctors, peers "into his anus," which "was the source of the wonderful jesting that went on all the time" (K, 254:3, 23-24). On this occasion, on the basis of his having had "pneumonia three times," and the consequent threat of "consumption" (K, 253:14-15), Somers is assessed a "C.2. – Fit for non-military service" (K, 256:1). All the while Lawrence builds a powerful dual sense of outrage – not only at the desire to establish a soldier's fitness for the destruction of others, but also the idea of fitness *per se*: "Somers did not care. Let them label me unfit, he said to himself. I know my own body is fragile, in its way but also it is very strong, and it's the only body that

would carry my particular self" (*K*, 221:12-14). The narrator turns Richard Somers's unfitness for military service on its head. It is British wartime society which is unhealthy: "They are *canaille*, carrion-eating" (*K*, 250:4). Somers grimly observes a healthy athletic man who submits willingly to the gross purposes of this society:

That athletic young fellow, he didn't seem to think he ought to mind at all. He looked on his body as a sort of piece of furniture, or a machine, to be handled and put to various uses. That was why he was athletic. Somers laughed, and thanked God for his own thin, underweight body. At least he remained himself, his own. He hoped the young athletic fellow would enjoy the uses they put him to. (*K*, 256:17-22)

In a letter of 31 May 1917 to Ernest Collings Lawrence wrote: "I feel that people have gone so wrong, they will just go on getting wronger, till a gradual collapse falls on humanity" (*iii*. 129). The endless inspections were exhausting for Lawrence, and inexplicable. He had a doctor's certificate rejected in June 1917 (*iii*. 132). In September 1918 he wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith: "These accursed people have put me in Grade 3. It kills me with speechless fury to be pawed by them. They shall *not* touch me again—such filth" (*iii*. 287). He could not have known the war was soon to end. He continued with desperation: "I want a job under the Ministry of Education: not where I shall be kicked about like an old can: I've had enough of that. You must help me to something where I shall not be ashamed" (*iii*. 287).

We must also consider Lawrence's deep distrust of national movements, ideologies and "isms" as important factors in his rejection of eugenics. Eugenics was anchored in the idea of a national good and Lawrence abhorred social and political interventions in the life of the individual. Other than in the most basic, material sense, Lawrence did not see that the essential (that is largely spiritual) condition of humanity could be improved by reformist movements. In "Democracy" he writes:

The proper adjustment of material means of existence: for this the State exists, but for nothing further. The State is a dead ideal. *Nation* is a dead ideal. Democracy and Socialism are dead ideals. They are one and all just

*contrivances* for the supplying of the lowest material needs of a people.  
(*P*, 701-702)

Because he rejected the idea of nation, he rejected movements which proclaimed national improvement, and he suspected the motives of those who harnessed themselves to national causes. On 16 August 1915, around the time of his break with Russell, Lawrence wrote to Lady Cynthia Asquith decrying what he saw as the all-too-easy appeal of giving-up one's integrity to political causes and religions, such as "liberalism" and "Fabianism," as well as "democracy," conservatism and the Roman Catholic Church, because one wanted to become one of the "independent little gods...little mortal Absolutes, secure from question" (*ii*. 378) – such was Mr May's wife and associates in *The Lost Girl*. Instead, Lawrence asserts the importance of "a right spirit" between people (*ii*. 378). Finally, Lawrence rejected what Galton himself articulated as the "essential elements in eugenics," namely the "capacity and zeal for work" for the national economic good.<sup>53</sup> In "Study of Thomas Hardy," Lawrence devotes two chapters to an attack on conventional attitudes to work, which in his mind, arose from economics or altruism. He writes of humanity's "ghastly programme" of work, where one works for "the future" or "for the poor" (*STH*, 32:28, 23, 24). In place of this tyranny he states: "Your business is to produce your own real life," (*STH*, 39:7) and it is this which lies at the heart of Lawrence's regenerative impulse.

### *Self and Sex: Towards a Lawrentian Philosophy of Regeneration*

In place of contemporary ideologies and policies for regeneration, Lawrence developed his own. There is no more complete symbol of Lawrence's regenerative vision than the phoenix, a symbol of regeneration in many countries, although we must also acknowledge the importance of the rainbow, and the phallus in Lawrence's symbology. Lawrence adopted the phoenix as his personal imprint, and identified with it throughout his adult life. This association has remained, through the adornment of book covers and other items Lawrentian. The first evidence of Lawrence's adoption of the symbol occurs in a letter of 16 June 1913 to Edward Garnett, where Frieda refers to "Phoenix L's name for me" (*ii*. 24). Just how and when Lawrence appropriated the phoenix symbol is not clear. He may have

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<sup>53</sup> Galton in *The Eugenics Review*, Vol. 2, April 1910-January 1911, p. 76.

discovered it through Christian symbolism (*ii.* 252 n. 5). On 4 March 1914, Lawrence considered that his philosophical writings which became “Study of Thomas Hardy” might be called “the Phoenix,” highlighting the centrality of Lawrence’s regenerative ideal even before the outbreak of World War I.

“Study of Thomas Hardy” is an early statement of Lawrence’s personal philosophy of regeneration, and although commenced just prior to the war, it quickly became an important part of his response to that conflict, as well as a platform for a new world-view. Lawrence wrote in September 1914: “What colossal idiocy this war. Out of sheer rage I’ve begun my book about Thomas Hardy. It will be about anything but Thomas Hardy I’m afraid” (*ii.* 212). In December he was referring to the work as “a sort of *Story of My Heart*: or a *Confessio Fidei*” (*ii.* 243). By February 1915, the “mostly philosophicalish, slightly about Hardy” work which he hoped to publish “in pamphlets,” was about the need to “create an idea of a new, freer life,” where the “money spirit is killed” (*ii.* 292-293). Bruce Steele notes that the versions of “Study of Thomas Hardy” which Lawrence worked on in 1915 do not survive.<sup>54</sup> The surviving published version is based on the typescript prepared by Lawrence’s friend S. S. Koteliensky,<sup>55</sup> to whom Lawrence sent the last of his material on 5 December 1914 (*ii.* 239). Whatever Lawrence’s subsequent revisions, there are regenerative themes in “Study” which resonate in most of Lawrence’s creative work. Early in “Study” Lawrence makes an overarching philosophical statement elucidating what he meant in his letter about the need to “create an idea of a new, freer life:”

The final aim of every living thing, creature, or being is the full achievement of itself. This accomplished, it will produce what it will produce, it will bear the fruit of its nature. Not the fruit, however, but the flower is the culmination and climax, the degree striven for. Not the work I shall produce, but the real Me I shall achieve, that is the consideration; of the complete Me will come the complete fruit of me, the work, the children. (*STH*, 12:36, 13:1-2)

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<sup>54</sup> Bruce Steele, “Introduction,” *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, by D. H. Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. xxx.

<sup>55</sup> Steele, “Introduction,” *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. xxxii.



Lawrence's vision is individualistic, rather than communal or social. Humans should look to "the common wild poppy" which "has achieved[...]its complete poppy-self, unquestionable. It has uncovered its "red" (*STH*, 13:3-4). This leads us to Lawrence's criticism of Hardy. Hardy's characters are denied, in Lawrentian terms, the possibility of "full achievement." In their quests they are punished:

This is the tragedy of Hardy, always the same: the tragedy of those who, more or less prisoners, have died in the wilderness whither they had escaped for free action, after having left the walled security, and the comparative imprisonment, or the established convention. (*STH*, 21:18-21)

Lawrence turns his criticism of Hardy into a call-to-arms for the individual to realise his or her true self, regardless of the demands or strictures put forward by society: "Let every man take his own, and go his own way, regardless of system and State, when his hour comes. Which is greater, the State or myself? Myself unquestionably, since the State is only an arrangement made for my convenience" (*STH*, 38:32-35).

In "Study" we also find Lawrence's expression of another of his primary concerns – the sexual relation between man and woman:

The supreme desire of every man is for mating with a woman, such that the sexual act be the closest, most concentrated motion in his life, closest upon the axle, the prime movement of himself, of which all the rest of his motion is a continuance in the same kind. And the vital desire of every woman is that she shall be clasped as axle to the hub of the man, that his motion shall portray her motionlessness, convey her static being into movement,[...]. (*STH*, 56:17-24)

This passage points to Lawrence's belief in a mutuality between the sexes founded on a presumed natural polarity founded on innate difference. Carol Siegel might have had it in mind when she wrote: "Beginning with *A Room of One's Own*..., feminist criticism has treated Lawrence as an adversary to women's writing because of his insistence on

irreducible gender difference.”<sup>56</sup> But as Siegel also points out: “At his most essentialist moments Lawrence seems most subversive of the ideologies that generally inform the representation of women in non feminist texts.”<sup>57</sup> And if Lawrence’s male creations are the “hub” to the female’s “axle,” we must acknowledge the resistance to male authority displayed by characters such as Ursula Brangwen, Alvina Houghton, and Harriett Somers. The need to redefine relations between the sexes was at the heart of Lawrence’s personal vision. He told Bertrand Russell in a letter of 24 February 1915:

So a vision of a better life must include a revolution of society. And one must fulfil one’s vision as much as possible. And the drama shall be between individual men and women, not between nations and classes. And the great living experience for every man is his adventure into the woman. (ii. 294)

In *The Boy in the Bush*, Lawrence extended this “adventure” into more than one woman, and I will discuss Lawrence’s exploration of bigamy in chapter 9. At the end of his life, Lawrence continued to assert his belief in the regenerative properties of sexual relations. In “A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover” Lawrence writes tartly: “When a ‘serious’ young man said to me the other day: ‘I can’t believe in the regeneration of England by sex, you know,’ I could only say: ‘I’m sure you can’t’” (*LCL*, 314:32-34).

### *Rananim*

Lawrence’s “Rananim” represents his communal, utopian ideal and, like the ideas he puts forward in “Study of Thomas Hardy” it arose out of his revulsion at the state of British society as it prosecuted World War I. Lawrence uses the term intermittently in his letters, and not at all in his fiction. Mark Kinkead-Weekes sees the war as opening “a chasm” between Lawrence and his erstwhile “social respectability,” exemplified by his July 1914 marriage to Frieda, and the “vast majority of English people” (*TE*, 181). Kinkead-Weekes notes the importance of Rananim in providing a “stronger symbolism” for Lawrence in the

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<sup>56</sup> Carol Siegel, *Lawrence Among the Women: Wavering Boundaries in Women’s Literary Tradition* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

face of his increasing social isolation after war broke out (*TE*, 181). Lawrence also expresses his intense disillusion in “Study of Thomas Hardy,” a disillusion which extended to both mainstream society and the marginal world of intellectuals and artists (*TE*, 181). In one respect *Rananim* is no more than a shared reference to a fantasy found mostly in correspondence between Lawrence and selected friends, such as S. S. Koteliansky and Katherine Mansfield. The term, however, has more substance than this would suggest, and at times Lawrence writes as if he really believes that he might gather together a community of hand-picked people, like-minded individuals who might live together creatively. And, at a symbolic level, *Rananim* encapsulates the breadth of Lawrence’s visionary and utopian quests, his movements between and within countries, and, importantly, his ever-evolving creative visions of regeneration. Thus *Rananim* exists subliminally, in Ursula’s vision of “the earth’s new architecture” (*R*, 459:6), in Birkin’s desire for “two kinds of love” (*WL*, 481:31), in Alvina’s and Ciccio’s hopes for a new life in America (*LG*, 339:20), in Mellors’s rejection of “the human world” (*LCL*, 220:27), and more concretely in Jack Grant’s vision of “a little world[...]in the “North-West” (*BB*, 337:34-35) of Western Australia in *The Boy in the Bush*.

Lawrence’s first reference to *Rananim* is in a letter he wrote to Koteliansky on 3 January 1915, about a month after he had sent him the last of his manuscripts of “Study of Thomas Hardy:”

What about *Rananim*? Oh but we are going. We are going to found an Order of the Knights of *Rananim*. The motto is “Fier” – or the Latin equivalent. The badge is So:

[Sketch]

an eagle, or phoenix argent, rising from a flaming nest of scarlet, on a black background. And our flag, the blazing ten-pointed star, scarlet on a black background.

[Sketch] (*ii*. 252-253)

Lawrence’s sketch at the bottom of the letter, is of a phoenix. This vision of *Rananim*, with its heraldic trappings is quite fanciful. It is also, however, an expression of a community which Lawrence wrote about in “Study,” but which he did not name. *Rananim* is the place where “people come out of the walled defence,” where with tents “pitched in the

open...very soon the walled city would be a mere dependent on the free tents of the wilderness" (*STH*, 38:38-40).

Rananim was soon to progress into something more coherent, if still utopian. On 18 January he wrote to his friend William Hopkin:

We will also talk of my pet scheme. I want to gather about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism as far as necessities of life go, and some real decency. It is to be a colony built up on the real decency which is in each member of the Community – a community which is established upon the assumption of goodness in the members, instead of the assumption of badness. (*ii*. 259)

Lawrence's "pet scheme" points to a further basis for his rejection of eugenics. While Rananim is a place of chosen people, it is not a place for people who have "survived" or been "improved" in any Darwinian or eugenic sense. Rather it is a place of simple "decency."

It was at this time that Lawrence came to know Lady Ottoline Morrell and her lover Bertrand Russell, some of the "candidates for Rananim" (*TE*, 187). He informed Koteliensky that he hoped to be working with Bertrand Russell: "We are going to struggle with my Island idea – Rananim – But they say, the island shall be England, that we shall start new community in the midst of the old one" (*ii*. 277).

In July 1915 he told Russell: "There must be an aristocracy of people who have wisdom, and there must be a Ruler: a Kaiser: no Presidents and democracies" (*ii*. 364), and he became quite excited about a "revolutionary party" (*ii*. 292). Towards the end of the year, Lawrence's ideal aspirations and formulations were challenged and radically re-shaped by three developments – his deepening anxiety about the war, disillusionment with the shared mission envisaged with Russell and Lady Ottoline, and the suppression of *The Rainbow*. As the war dragged on Lawrence developed what became an unshakeably apocalyptic view of society. This is exemplified in a letter to Ottoline on 9 September 1915 where, having witnessed a Zeppelin raid on London he wrote: "It seemed as if the cosmic order were gone, as if there had come a new order, a new heaven upon us... So it is the end – our world is gone... but there must be a new heaven and a new earth..." (*ii*. 390).

Lawrence's partnership with Russell eventually collapsed over their fundamentally opposed, spiritual and political visions of society. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes points out, Lawrence's relationship with Russell was also "contaminated by clashes of personality" (*TE*, 260), he lost faith in Russell, writing that Russell (and Ottoline) "filch my life for a sensation unto themselves" (*ii*. 381). This culminated in the abandonment of a proposed lecture tour with Russell. "The conception of Rananim that had grown at Greatham [the home of the poet Alice Meynell where the Lawrence's resided for a time) had to be discarded," Kinkead-Weekes observes (*TE*, 260). Lawrence abandoned England as the site for Rananim, and his attention turned abroad.

*Rananim in America, Cornwall and Beyond*

At the end of October 1915, Lawrence applied for passports to America (*TE*, 279). At this time, America provided a focus for his regenerative ideals. He was desperate to get there. Lawrence believed Americans to be more down-to-earth and less "priggish" than the English (*ii*.146). With Britain thoroughly embroiled in total war with Germany, Lawrence looked to America as a shining light amid the ruin which he felt awaited Europe. Writing to Harriet Monroe in America on 15 September 1915 Lawrence wrote of the degenerative effects of the war:

Only I feel, that even if we are all going to be rushed down to extinction, one must hold up the other, living truth, of Right, and pure reality, the reality of the clear, eternal spirit. One must speak for life and growth, amid all this mass of destruction and disintegration. ...

Pray to heaven to keep America always out of the war. God knows what will be the end of Europe. (*ii*. 394)

On the same day he wrote to Amy Lowell, the American imagist poet, outlining his creative efforts which were "the attempt to get at the real basis from which to start a reconstructive idea of this life of ours" (*ii*. 394). By 5 November 1915 the police had, for a second time, raided Methuen, publishers of *The Rainbow*, and Lawrence knew that the novel would be suppressed (*TE*, 277, 280). Kinkead-Weekes observes: "It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of this on Lawrence. He had been made to feel a contemptible alien in his

homeland" *TE*, 282). "It is the end of my writing for England," Lawrence informed his publisher" (*ii*. 429). Lawrence prepared to sail to Florida at the end of November (*TE*, 281-282).

Lawrence's resolve to go to America at this time was later displaced by his decision to stay and see out the challenges to *The Rainbow* and the subsequent need to respond to new recruiting requirements (*TE*, 286, 293). While America remained in his sights, for the present Cornwall would be his new home. "This is the first move to Florida," he wrote to Koteliensky from Padstow on 30 December 1915, the day he and Frieda arrived (*ii*. 491). The new environment revived Lawrence. Responding to the wild landscape he wrote: "I think my life begins again" (*ii*. 493). Kinkead-Weekes observes that for Lawrence, Cornwall was "a place of regeneration" and that his and Frieda's initial stay at Porthcothan can be seen as an early expression of *Rananim* (*TE*, 296). Over several months at Porthcothan the Lawrences, somewhat unsuccessfully hosted visits from some of their artist friends. They then moved to Higher Tregerthen where two cottages were available and Lawrence invited John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield to be neighbours in an affirmation of the special relationship between Lawrence and Murry which Lawrence referred to as a "Bludbruderschaft" (*TE*, 316). Kinkead-Weekes sees this as a second attempt at *Rananim* (*TE*, 311-312). It appears, however, to have been a complete failure and he reproduces Mansfield's account contained in her letter of 11 May 1916 to Koteliensky:

You may laugh as much as you like at this letter, darling, all about the COMMUNITY. It is rather funny. Frieda and I do not even speak to each other at present. Lawrence is about one million miles away, although he lives next door. (*TE*, 319)

This letter also records Lawrence's inability to take criticism, his ungovernable temper, and a violent assault on Frieda. This fledgling *Rananim* was not doing well.

By November 1916 Lawrence was again looking to America, albeit with some ambivalence:

In short, I want immediately or at length, to transfer all my life to America. Because there I know the skies are not so old, the air is newer, the earth is

not tired. Don't think I have any illusions about the people, the life. The people and the life are monstrous. I want, at length, to get a place in the far west mountains, from which one can see the distant Pacific Ocean, and there live facing the bright west. – But I also think that America, being so much *worse*, falser, further gone than England, is nearer to freedom. England has a long and awful process of corruption to go through. America has dry-rotted to a point where the final *seed* of the new is almost left ready to sprout. (*iii*. 25)

Lawrence reveals his debt to degenerationist theorists, such as Flinders Petrie and Nietzsche, who saw degeneration as a precursor to regeneration. Pragmatically, Lawrence also believed that he might sell his “stuff” in America (*iii*. 69). At this time Lawrence ordered a huge list of American books from Koteliansky, including Melville, Cooper, Whitman and his reading of these works led to his *Studies in American Literature*. The influence of Melville is evident in Frieda's association of Rananim with “Typee” (*iii*. 66). While he became immersed in America, in the letter to Koteliansky, Lawrence reveals that Rananim might also lie elsewhere:

I think the best thing would be for us all to go to America in February, if it were possible. I have *finally* decided that it is only possible to live out of the world – make a sort of Garden of Eden of blameless but fulfilled souls, in some sufficiently remote spot – the Marquesas Islands, Nukuheva.  
(*iii*. 65)

The location of Rananim remained fluid. It might indeed be in America, in “California” (*iii*. 70), or on “the east slope of the Andes” with a group of chosen individuals including the poet H. D., but not the Murrays or Ottoline or Russell (*iii*. 173). By February 1917 Lawrence had redoubled his efforts to get to America, trying to get passports in order. He wrote to Koteliansky: “Everything seems to have gone to pot in the world. And still I hope – hope to get away, hope that America won't come in [to the war], hope we can find our Rananim” (*iii*. 90). Part of the appeal of America lay in its neutrality at this time, and Lawrence feared its entry would be a “fearful blow” (*iii*. 91).

It was Lawrence's expulsion from Cornwall by the military authorities in October 1917 which lent much of the urgency to his bid to leave England (*iii*. 168), but Lawrence continued his vision of Rananim after the end of the war. Despite the failure of the Cornish attempt at community with Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield, several years later, on 20 December 1918, Lawrence wrote to Mansfield, somewhat nostalgically, lamenting the lost opportunity:

I have a sort of feeling that you are not very well. But tomorrow is the *shortest* day, and then the tide turns. I do so want to do nice gay happy things, to start at once. I hate work, and I don't want to work – write, that is. I wish we'd had our Rananim – or got it. I should so love gaily to and easily to mess about. (*iii*. 309)

On New Year's day 1919, he told Koteliensky somewhat pessimistically that he "still had some sort of hope for Rananim: the last hope" (*iii*. 316). Intertwined with Lawrence's hope for Rananim was his urgent search for a congenial place to live outside England. The next day, in a letter to Edith Eder, he wrote that while he still hoped for the Andes, he wanted "to know about Palestine" and that it might "be practicable" (*iii*. 316).

On 17 November 1919, Lawrence and Frieda left England, for Italy. Kinkead-Weekes writes that Lawrence "had become an alien and would never feel at home there again" (*TE*, 531). He was still restless, and considered "the Pacific" (*iii*. 417) and then "Africa" and "Zululand" (*iii*. 449) as possibilities for settlement. In January 1920, he thought again of the South Seas, possibly in the company of the author Compton Mackenzie (*iii*. 461-462). Frieda wrote in July 1920 of hoping to meet Lawrence's American agent, Robert Mountsier, "on the island of Rananim" (*iii*. 571). On 3 November 1921 Lawrence told Mountsier that America still beckoned. He was considering taking over a run-down farm, but the South Seas remained the site for Rananim (*iii*. 659). Lawrence still felt the impulse to move, but nowhere seemed right. He and Frieda had been invited to Taos, New Mexico, by Mabel Dodge Sterne. On 14 January 1922 he told Koteliensky, somewhat desperately: "Taos I hear has a colony of New York artists. Oh God," (*iv*. 165). He also wrote of his nostalgia for their dream of Rananim. Koteliensky was one of the stalwarts for Rananim in Lawrence's mind. He wrote in the same letter: "If we go to Taos, and if we get on there, perhaps you will come too: if there could be



something: and if you would like to back me up" (iv. 165-166). Lawrence then made his famous about face, revising his plans for America. He told Mountsier: "Suddenly that I am on the point of coming to America I feel I can't come. Not yet. It is something almost stronger than I am. I would rather go to Ceylon, and come to America later, from the east" (iv. 168). In chapter 3 I will argue that Lawrence's desire to visit Australia informed his decision to approach from "the east." This is because Australia also formed part of Lawrence's regenerative vision.

### *Rananim in Australia*

Nowhere in his writing does Lawrence expressly link Australia with his vision of Rananim, which in early writings he referred to simply as "my Island" (ii. 266). Lawrence's early vision of Australia, however, encapsulates much of the essence of Rananim. And, the vision of community in the north-west of Western Australia evoked in *The Boy in the Bush*, is an example of the fluid geography of Rananim. Lawrence's early imaginings of Australia can be located in the broader context of the duality in British visions of Australia which were apparent from its first settlement at the end of the eighteenth century, and which persisted through to the Edwardian and post-Edwardian imperial environment of Lawrence's day. Patrick Brantlinger notes the contradictions in early and mid-nineteenth century imaginings of Australia, prior to Darwin, where "the pastoral, wilderness setting of Australia has redemptive power," but Botany Bay, with its convict connotation, is an "infernal domain."<sup>58</sup> Coral Lansbury points to Charles Dickens's complex engagement with Australia and observes that "Arcadian Australian and Botany Bay comingled and became one in Dickens's mind."<sup>59</sup> Lansbury notes that while in *David Copperfield*, Wilkins Micawber makes good in Australia, and "writes to David in rapture from Port Middlebay [Melbourne]," success in Australia "was in itself an admission of failure in England."<sup>60</sup> Richard White observes that Dickens's Magwitch, the returned convict from Australia in *Great Expectations* (1861), illustrates the fear of contamination felt in the

<sup>58</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 110, 111.

<sup>59</sup> Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970), pp. 95.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

homeland.<sup>61</sup> Lawrence was familiar with both of these novels by Dickens. At the time he conceived of *Rananim*, however, it appears that he held a positive and regenerative view of Australia. This was probably reinforced by his recent exposure to Australian anthropology through the works of Sir James Frazer, and his reading of a novel by Grant Watson, *Where Bonds Are Loosed*, which is set in Australia.

At this time Lawrence was beginning to develop his complex ideas of individual consciousness. An early articulation of this is a letter to Russell written on 8 December 1915, a few weeks before the move to Cornwall. He had been reading Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy* from which he deduced:

There is the blood-consciousness with the sexual connection[...]. This is one half of life belonging to the darkness. And the tragedy of this our life, and of your life, is that the mental and nerve consciousness exerts a tyranny over the blood-consciousness. (ii. 470)

Lawrence elaborated on "blood-consciousness" in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, published in 1922, where he writes: "The blood-consciousness and the blood passion is the very source and origin of us" (*PU*, 191:33-34). Lawrence's theory reflects his deep suspicion of mental consciousness and his attempt to assert the primacy of the senses, and highlights the basis for his ultimate break with Russell, and his distance from contemporary intellectuals and political and social reformers. As Fiona Becket remarks: "Perhaps alone amongst his modernist contemporaries Lawrence made the genealogy of 'consciousness' his principle subject."<sup>62</sup> Importantly, Australian Aborigines formed a significant part of Frazer's studies, and Lawrence's consequent theory of blood consciousness. Through Frazer, Lawrence absorbed a massive amount of Australian anthropology from a major contemporary figure. As with his absorption of Darwinism, it is apparent that Frazer's anthropology underwent a metamorphosis once lodged in Lawrence's mind. I will discuss this more fully in chapter 8. Three weeks after this letter, as I have mentioned, Lawrence moved to Cornwall to commence his first attempt at *Rananim*, with Australian Aboriginal "blood-knowledge"

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<sup>61</sup> Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> Fiona Becket, "Lawrence and Psychoanalysis," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough, p.226.

fresh in his mind. He wrote passionately that “the whole of our future life depends on it” (ii. 471).

After a fortnight in Cornwall Lawrence writes of another encounter with Australia, which may well have been the turning point in his awareness of the country. He reports reading an adventure novel set, proleptically, in light of the locale for much of *The Boy in the Bush*, in the north-west of Western Australia. Lawrence wrote to Catherine Carswell on 11 January 1916:

I read *Where Bonds Are Loosed*. It has got some real go in it. But it is based on a mistaken idea that brutality is the desideratum. But let us hope the war will cure him of this idea. He seemed in his book to have real courage and vitality, but to be a bit *stupid*. But I forgive stupidity, for strength of feeling. Do keep on knowing him, if you can, and if you really like him, let me know him too. Don't let him slip. Tell me about him, if he is any good, and if you think well, ask him to write to me. (ii. 502)

*Where Bonds Are Loosed* was written by English author, Grant Watson, and had been published in 1914. It is set in the north-west of Western Australia – part of a fictional “New Ireland.”<sup>63</sup> Lawrence was probably reading the novel a month earlier when he advised Ottoline, a contender for Rananim, in a letter of 7 December 1915: “Let all knots be broken, all bonds unloosed” (ii. 468). I have discussed elsewhere the catalytic effect this novel seems to have had on Lawrence’s interest in Australia and its particular resonances in *The Boy in the Bush*.<sup>64</sup> There are striking similarities between *Where Bonds Are Loosed* and *The Boy in the Bush*. Both novels, for example, explore the consequences of an Englishman’s experience of north-west Western Australia, remote from civilisation. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two works. Lawrence in *The Boy* paints a far more regenerative picture of Australia than does Watson in *Where Bonds*. That novel’s protagonist, Sherwin, is an Englishman who arrives in Australia to seek his fortune and becomes an overseer in a remote Aboriginal mission on islands off the north-west of

<sup>63</sup> Grant Watson, *Where Bonds Are Loosed* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1920), p. 15. New Ireland is a province of modern Papua-New Guinea comprising several islands to the north-east of that country’s main land mass.

<sup>64</sup> David Game, “Grant Watson’s *Where Bonds Are Loosed*: A Stimulus for Lawrence’s ‘Australian Period’ with Particular Resonances in *The Boy in the Bush*,” *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies* Volume. 1 Number 3, 2008, pp. 97-123.

Western Australia. In many respects the novel is a cautionary tale of white degeneration in a “savage” environment, and in Watson’s *Sherwin* there are echoes of Conrad’s Kurtz. Conrad read Watson’s novel in manuscript.<sup>65</sup> Lawrence’s letter reveals that he found the novel excessively violent. His fascination at this time with the “blood consciousness” associated with Australian Aborigines helps explain his interest in what is a fairly minor novel. Lawrence saw regenerative possibilities in Australia, rather than Watson’s Conradian disintegration. In January 1916, therefore, while Lawrence was settling in to Cornwall, and was still thinking that Florida might be possible (*ii*. 506), a regenerative vision of Australia appears to have also begun to take root in Lawrence’s mind, informing his early conception of *Rananim*. And Lawrence’s attraction to aspects of *Where Bonds* helps to explain his introduction of Australian characters into *The Lost Girl*, and *Aaron’s Rod*, before his visit to Australia and before he had written *Kangaroo*.

After the war, Lawrence left England. Neil Roberts in *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference*, sees Lawrence’s body of work between *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) as his “attempts to come to terms with the cultural and religious alternatives to European civilisation.”<sup>66</sup> This period, I suggest, may be extended to include *The Lost Girl* (1920), where Alvina Houghton flees from England to Europe and ultimately the prospect of life in America. Roberts proposes a distinction between Lawrence’s restless travels, and his esoteric and utopian vision of new community, arguing that although *Rananim* did embrace foreign locales, such as Florida and New Mexico, *Rananim* is “fundamentally different from the quest for the cultural other: engagement with the native of the chosen location plays no part in it.”<sup>67</sup> There are difficulties with this strict separation when we consider Lawrence’s Australian novels, particularly *The Boy in the Bush*. In that novel, Lawrence incorporates Roberts’s “cultural other” through the Englishman Jack Grant’s desire for a *Rananim*-like community with his colonial Australian wife and the Australian Tom Ellis. Moreover, Jack’s vision of community is imbued with “dark mystery:”

<sup>65</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, eds. William Wilde, Joy Hooten, and Barry Andrews (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 800.

<sup>66</sup> Neil Roberts, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

He had to make room again on earth for those who are not unbroken, those who are not tamed to carrion. Some place for those who know the dark mystery of being royal in death, so that they can enact the shadow of their own royalty on earth. Some place for the souls that are in themselves dark and have some of the sumptuousness of proud death, no matter what their fathers were.

[...]He wanted to make a place on earth for a few aristocrats-to-the-bone.  
(*BB*, 308:1-13)

In chapter 8 I will discuss the role of Aboriginal spirituality in Jack's "dark" vision.

### *The End of Rananim*

Perhaps the most formal and coherent attempt at community by Lawrence was his invitation just before Christmas 1923 "at the Café Royal,"<sup>68</sup> to a group of his closest friends to accompany him and Frieda back to America, on what would be his second and final visit. John Worthen suggests that Lawrence by this time wasn't "fantasising about setting up a permanent colony,"<sup>69</sup> rather that he felt a more basic need for the company of friends, and, with the ranch in New Mexico, for the first time had a place to offer. Keith Sagar, however, observes that his dream of ideal community was still very much alive at the end of 1923, suggesting that "Lawrence had gone to London specifically to recruit candidates for Rananim."<sup>70</sup> The tone of Lawrence's letters falls somewhere between these positions. It appears that Lawrence's primary reason for returning to England at this time was to sort out his relationship with Frieda (*iv*. 529). Lawrence was clear, however, that regeneration lay in America: "The New will happen over here," he wrote (*iv*. 539). After the disastrous evening at the Café Royal, in which Lawrence, after inviting his friends to America collapsed drunk, and had to be carted home in a taxi (*DG*, 152), Dorothy Brett, an aristocratic artist, who had had a relationship with Katherine Mansfield's husband, John Middleton Murry, was the only person to take up Lawrence's offer (*iv*. 301). "Dorothy

<sup>68</sup> John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 298. Worthen suggests that the date of the dinner was 22 or 23 December. Paul Eggert suggests "inferentially" that it was held on 19 December (*BB*, xxxii, n. 45).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>70</sup> Keith Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 258.

Brett, an old friend, wants to come too,” he wrote simply (*iv*. 550). Murry was also entertained by Lawrence as a candidate (*iv*. 556). Paul Eggert notes that Lawrence wrote the last chapter of *The Boy in The Bush* while in London at this time (*BB*, lvii), and that the further developed minor character in this chapter, Hilda Blessingham, is based on Brett (*BB*, 432). The novel concludes with the possibility of Rananim in Australia, rather than its realisation. This is partly because Lawrence’s attention had shifted to America, but also because the realisation of Rananim would always be problematic. Lawrence, Frieda and Brett sailed for America on 5 March 1924 to begin a “new experiment in communal living” (*DG*, 172). The community of three appears to have settled quickly. Brett typed for Lawrence and helped with renovations, and occupied a small cabin adjacent to the Lawrence’s at the Lobo ranch, which had belonged to Mabel Luhan (*DG*, 185-186). While the ranch appears to have inspired the regenerative new world setting for the latter part of *St. Mawr* (*DG*, 193), Lawrence’s dream of Rananim soon played out. In early 1926, while in Italy, Lawrence informed Koteliansky: “That Rananim of ours, it has sunk out of sight” (*v*. 367).

I have shown that Lawrence’s curiosity about Australia and important elements of his evocation of Australia in his Australian work must be linked with his longstanding quest for Rananim, a quest which, as I will show in the next chapter, may be connected to a major regenerative element in the relations between Britain and Australia – emigration.

### 3. MR AND MRS LAWRENCE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA: A BIOGRAPHICAL FOREGROUND

Lawrence's experience of Australia tends to be overshadowed by his more lengthy sojourns in Italy and America. His three months' visit is commonly regarded as merely a whistle-stop en route to Taos in New Mexico, to stay with Mabel Sterne (later Luhan). Neil Roberts rightly sees *Kangaroo* as an example of D. H. Lawrence's extensive travel writings.<sup>1</sup> That novel is, indeed, an important outcome of Lawrence's fascination with different cultures, and his extensive travel abroad, particularly after World War I. There is, however, another dimension to Lawrence's engagement with Australia. He was more than a curious traveller. As I have outlined in the previous chapter, by the middle of World War I, Australia was, in Lawrence's mind, associated with his idea of "blood-consciousness," already discussed, and his wider hopes for a utopian and regenerative Rananim. I hope in this chapter, to demonstrate that prior to his arrival in Australia, Lawrence had an image of Australia which, like his vision of Rananim, was idealistic, but which was aligned with one of the major regenerative currents of his time – migration. As Chris Baldick observes: "The importance of migration in the culture of the twentieth-century may yet refresh our sense of Lawrence in his time."<sup>2</sup> Lawrence and his wife Frieda may be seen not simply as visitors to Australia, but as prospective migrants.

British emigration to Australia is a theme in "The Primrose Path," *The Lost Girl*, *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* and the subject will form part of my discussions of these texts in subsequent chapters. In this chapter I will examine some origins for Lawrence's interest in emigration to Australia, which further explains his mostly optimistic speculations about Australia prior to his visit. While there is no direct evidence that Lawrence articulated a desire to settle in Australia, the fact that several of his characters consider the prospect, and that Jack Grant in *The Boy in the Bush* does so, suggests that he may have toyed with the idea, or at the very least was curious about the prospect. Lawrence's exposure to the wider currents of British migration through the experience of a close family member, his close friendships with Katherine Mansfield and Eleanor Farjeon,

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<sup>1</sup> See Roberts, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference*.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Baldick, "Post-Mortem: Lawrence's Critical and Cultural Legacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough, p. 267.

both of whom had strong Antipodean connections, as well as his reading in literature and anthropology all helped to produce in Lawrence a positive attitude to Australia prior to 4 May 1922, when he set foot in Perth, Western Australia. Moreover, I will argue that by early 1922, Lawrence's interest in Australia was sufficiently aroused to have influenced his decision to delay his trip to America.

### *Lawrence and British Migration to Australia*

Lawrence, as is well known, was the son of a coal miner. It is less obvious, however, that he came from a class in British society which had long looked to emigration to the British colonies and later the dominions as a way of improving their circumstances. Substantial numbers of British coalminers arrived in Australia during the 1880s, and between 1921 and 1929 around 8,000 coalminers emigrated to Australia from England and Scotland.<sup>3</sup> To cite an eminent example, Joseph Cook, a miner from North Staffordshire, who left England in 1885, and whose father was a "“butty miner,”" like Lawrence's father, became Prime Minister of Australia in 1913.<sup>4</sup> The year 1922, when Lawrence arrived, is significant in the history of British migration to Australia and provides a wider context for Lawrence's journey, and for the British people he met on board ship, particularly the British migrants he met on the final leg to Sydney. In 1922 the *Empire Settlement Act* was passed in the British Parliament, and this, W. D. Borrie notes, was the outcome of co-operative activity between Britain and the Dominions and was "the most positive step taken by the United Kingdom to influence the flow of emigrants since the colonies of Australia and New Zealand were granted self government."<sup>5</sup> The *Empire Settlement Act* was aimed at fulfilling two reciprocal needs. In Britain, there was the regenerative vision of distributing people from the "overpopulated centre to the wide-open spaces of the periphery."<sup>6</sup> Australia, which was the Dominion most heavily involved, had a complementary vision of rural settlement, and "the emphasis was on land settlement schemes which were seen as an opportunity to boost primary export industries."<sup>7</sup> Borrie concludes, however, that the migration schemes arising from the *Act* were, in many respects, a failure. He observes that

<sup>3</sup> James Jupp, *The English in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 74, 77.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>5</sup> W. D. Borrie, *The European Peopling of Australia: A Demographic History, 1788-1988* (Canberra: The Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1994) p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



“a fair proportion” of these migrants “would probably have found their way to the Dominions through more traditional channels.”<sup>8</sup>

The *Empire Settlement Act*, regardless of its success, is an important indicator of British and Australian self-images and social visions in the 1920s. After World War I Australia recruited hard in Britain using cinemas and exhibitions as well as print media. Two pamphlets from 1921, *Australia Invites the Domestic Girl* and *Australia's Offer to the British Boy*, are emblematic of these efforts.<sup>9</sup> Both pamphlets idealise Australia as rural, emphasising its spaciousness and healthy way of life. In Britain, however, not everyone was convinced that migration was a good thing and Michael Roe points to some further reasons why the *Empire Settlement Act* was not more successful. He observes that there was considerable “popular resistance to emigration” in Britain after the war.<sup>10</sup> And “the 1920s,” Roe notes, “never saw a repetition of the pre-1914 migrationist boom,” because of post-war exhaustion and positive changes to welfare policies in Britain.<sup>11</sup> Roe also notes a generalised opposition by British labour, partly based on a perception that migration assisted capitalism.<sup>12</sup> Deeper, psychological reasons appear also to have lain at the heart of working class reservations. Roe cites the observations of a British migrant to Australia, a Mr Hatfield, who arrived in 1912, who remarked in 1937:

In respectable working class England the member of the family who ‘had to emigrate’ was the blot on the escutcheon. You were rating yourself low if you imagined you could do better in any other country than your own.<sup>13</sup>

This points to a continuation, well into the twentieth century, of the ambivalence felt in England towards migration to Australia, which, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Coral Lansbury notes is evident in Dickens. Lawrence grew up in a “respectable” working class household in working-class Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in which this view appears to have prevailed. His mother was driven to raise her children out of the working class through education, not emigration. Lawrence’s mother had grown up in grinding poverty

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Pamphlets held by the Royal Commonwealth Society Library reprinted in Michael Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 195-199.

<sup>10</sup> Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> Hatfield quoted in Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration*, p. 181.

and, as John Worthen puts it: “*Her* children would break the chain of an industrial class condemned to suffer, generation after generation, the same working conditions, the awful risks,” and, “at the very least” they should “become clerks.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, his mother’s “favourite” brother, Herbert Beardsall, whose name Lawrence bears, had emigrated to Australia, inspiring “The Primrose Path” (*EME*, 246). This early tale forms Lawrence’s first critique of Australia, but this aspect has been entirely ignored by critics. I will explore the tale more fully in chapter 4, but it is useful to note at this point that Beardsall’s experience of emigration to Australia, as depicted in “The Primrose Path,” appears to have been less than successful. If this tale is any guide, Herbert Beardsall was “the black-sheep” of the family (*EME*, 124:40).

It is unclear when Lawrence composed the tale but it was completed by July 1913 (*TE*, 732). Nor is it clear when Beardsall emigrated, but clearly it was before this date. It is significant, however, that around this time, on 13 July 1912, and some ten years before his arrival in Australia, Lawrence begins a letter to May Holbrook, with an enthusiastic reference to what he assumed was her plan to emigrate to Australia:

What an exciting letter that was! The emigration idea is, I should say, a fine one. Australia is a new country, new morals: it is not split from England, but a new nation. But which of the States? – you don’t say – N. S. Wales or Queensland. I shan’t come back to England for a long time, if I can help it. Now, I want to wander? (*i.* 425)

Holbrook ultimately went to Canada (*i.* 499, n. 2), but Lawrence’s response is notable for several reasons. Most obviously, Australia and migration are explicitly linked in Lawrence’s mind. Significantly, Australia is “new” and not “split” from England, suggesting a distinct culture and identity (in both areas he was ultimately disappointed). And he understands Australia’s basic political geography. More broadly, the letter points to Lawrence being attracted to living abroad before his overwhelming disillusionment with England which developed after the commencement of the war, and the later suppression of *The Rainbow*. Importantly, Lawrence’s vision of Australia is intensely idealistic and regenerative. He sees “new morals” rather than the purely economic benefits which are

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<sup>14</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, pp. 6-7.

usually attached to migration. And, the tone of this passage suggests that Lawrence might also like to travel to Australia one day.

### *Representations of Australia in Literature*

I have already touched on Lawrence's familiarity with Dickens and the writing of Grant Watson in the context of his vision of Rananim. In many respects, Rananim may be seen as a rarefied and idealistic place of migration, and these authors, as well as several others, also informed Lawrence's perception of Australia as a possible destination for aspiring British citizens, at times problematic, but also promising. In *David Copperfield*, which he had read by 1904,<sup>15</sup> which Jessie Chambers states was his favourite Dickens,<sup>16</sup> Lawrence, encountered the troubled Micawber leaving England and thriving in a prosperous Australia. By contrast, in *Great Expectations* (1861), which Lawrence also presumably read in his youth, but which he does not refer to until 1917 (iii. 131), Magwitch, as I have noted, returns to London from the seemingly impossible distance of Australia, having served his time as a convict, to haunt the metropolis. This trope continued in English literature long after transportation had ceased. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1896), which Lawrence first refers to in a letter of 17 December 1910 (i. 205), just as he had completed *The White Peacock*, Arabella, with her "Australian husband, formerly manager of the hotel in Sydney,"<sup>17</sup> like Magwitch, also complicates the tidy affairs of England with her inconvenient return from Australia. In 1912 Lawrence read Henry Lawson, most likely the stories published as *Children of the Bush* published in 1902 (i. 376). In Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*, which Lawrence refers to in a letter of 1916, in the context of his childhood favourites (ii. 588), he found a romantic Australia. In Grant Watson's *Where Bonds Are Loosed* the novel's protagonist, Sherwin, is "a red-bearded Englishman" (like Lawrence!) who migrates to Australia "in the hope of a quick fortune."<sup>18</sup> In these early fictional encounters with Australia, therefore, Lawrence found a wealth of absorbing images of life in Australia – often regenerative or romantic, but also, at times sinister.

In early 1916, there is a noteworthy concentration of references to Australia in Lawrence's reading. He read Watson's novel in January, and then in February 1916,

<sup>15</sup> Burwell, "A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence's Reading," p. 202.

<sup>16</sup> Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1965), p.95.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 211.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, *Where Bonds Are Loosed*, pp. 2, 3.

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) finding it "very odd" but also "interesting" (ii. 528). Lawrence had a high regard for Melville, describing him as "the greatest poet and seer of the sea" (*SCAL*, 122:4). In *Moby-Dick* Lawrence found a regenerative vision of Australia as a rising country in the south:

That great America on the other side of the sphere, Australia, was given to the enlightened world by the whaleman. After its first blunder-born discovery by a Dutchman, all other ships long shunned those shores as pestiferously barbarous; but the whale-ship touched there. The whale-ship is the true mother of that now mighty colony. Moreover, in the infancy of the first Australian settlement, the emigrants were several times saved from starvation by the benevolent biscuit of the whale-ship luckily dropping an anchor in their waters.<sup>19</sup>

Melville's evocation of Australia as "that great America," and a "mighty colony" would surely have resonated with Lawrence at a time when he had given up hope in England and was desperately trying to leave the country. While his reading of Melville was an important part of his gathering focus on America, which by late 1917 he felt he would travel to after the war (*iii*. 157), it would, simultaneously have reminded him of the possibilities in Australia. Melville's expression of a romantic foundational myth for Australia as stemming from "the benevolent biscuit of the whale-ship," an exaggerated reference to the early food shortages in New South Wales and its early trade with America and whaling vessels,<sup>20</sup> would have appealed to Lawrence's own vision of new community. He may well have delighted in Melville's re-telling in much the same way as he did after reading the account of the early settlement of Western Australia many years later.<sup>21</sup>

In Edward Said's "contrapuntal reading" of *David Copperfield*, "references to Australia...are made because they *can* be, because British power (and not just the novelist's fancy) made passing references to these massive appropriations possible."<sup>22</sup> Said's reading provides a valuable lens for considering Lawrence's speculations about life in Australia, his

<sup>19</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick or The Whale* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2002), p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> See C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia, I, From the Earliest Times to the Age of Macquarie* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1992), p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> M. L. Skinner, *The Fifth Sparrow: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), pp. 112-113. Skinner recalls Lawrence's fascination with an account of the foundation of Western Australia.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 78.

early introduction of Australian characters into his novels, and his eventual journey. Quite simply Lawrence engaged Australia because he *could*. As part of empire, Australia was an extension of British culture and territory. Lawrence might come and go as he pleased. Social and foreign policy in England and Australia supported this. Part of Lawrence's difficulty with America, by contrast, was its difference. Crossing from Mexico back into the United States, and recovering from malaria and tuberculosis, Lawrence writes on 6 April 1925: "The Emigration Authorities at El Paso treated us as Emigrants and nearly killed me a second time" (v. 230). For emigrants, Lawrence really means "foreigners." His earlier entry to "British" Australia had been unquestioned by the Australian authorities.

### *Antipodean Contacts*

In addition to fictional encounters with Australia, Lawrence was aware of Australian expatriates who inhabited London. On 28 February 1910 Lawrence wrote to an Australian concert singer, Florence Wood, to whom he had been introduced by Ezra Pound, regretting that he could not attend a concert of hers (*i.* 155 and n. 2). In July 1911 he heard the renowned Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba perform *La Bohème*. Lawrence found her "very good, but a bit tense, strenuous as a singer" (*i.* 281). In November 1911 he informed his sister that he had some music "belonging to a girl who is going to Australia," perhaps the Australian pianist associated with Florence Wood (*i.* 324, and n. 2). More significantly, Lawrence became very close to the New Zealand-born Katherine Mansfield, and the British author Eleanor Farjeon, both of whom had parents born in Australia. These women may also have stimulated Lawrence's interest in Australia as a place of promise.

Lawrence met Katherine Mansfield in 1913 and established an immediate rapport,<sup>23</sup> and I have outlined the Lawrences' attempt at community with Mansfield and her lover John Middleton Murry in Cornwall early in the war. Although life in Cornwall was not harmonious between the couples, Lawrence maintained a warm and lively correspondence with Mansfield for several years, as many later letters from early 1919 show (*iii.* 324, 327, 338). It is also possible that any conversations she may have had with Lawrence about her New Zealand upbringing could have included references to Australia, and contributed to Lawrence's positive impressions of life in Australia. Lawrence had by this time read

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<sup>23</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, p. 135.

Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), a Swiftian satire on contemporary Victorian society, with utopian themes, and whose geography is informed by Butler's stay in New Zealand. Mansfield's father was born on an Australian gold field and her mother's mother, "daughter of a Sydney publican," was also born in Australia.<sup>24</sup> Mansfield had no first-hand knowledge of Australia, but she visited "Australian ports" en route to New Zealand from England in 1906,<sup>25</sup> probably Melbourne, Adelaide and Fremantle, and may have given Lawrence descriptions of these. Whatever the conversations between them, Lawrence conflated Australia and New Zealand, at least as far as Mansfield was concerned. While sailing in "the Gt. Australian Bight" between Fremantle and Adelaide, en route to Sydney, Lawrence appears to have completed the puzzle in his understanding of her. In a letter to S. S. Kotliansky he describes Australians as "very friendly, but slow and as if unwilling to take the next step" and continues: "If you were here you would understand Katherine so much better. She is *very* Australian – or New Zealand. Wonder how she is" (*iv*. 241).

Lawrence met Eleanor Farjeon in March 1915 (*TE*, 220), and he discussed her poetry and prose in a letter to her in May 1915 (*ii*. 341). Also in May 1915, Lawrence "walked over the Downs to Chichester" with Farjeon (*TE*, 230). Lawrence corresponded with other members of her family for several years, and his last mention of Eleanor is in a letter to Rosalind Baynes in August 1921 (*iv*. 67). Farjeon's father, Benjamin, also a writer, had travelled to Australia in 1854, trying his luck on the goldfields and dabbling in journalism in Australia and New Zealand. He published his first story in 1865 with a dedication to Charles Dickens. After receiving encouraging correspondence from Dickens he returned to England. In 1866 he published *Grif: A Story of Australian Life* as well as at least half a dozen novels which drew on his Australian experiences.<sup>26</sup> While there is no evidence that Lawrence read or heard of these works, we must assume that his daughter Eleanor, herself a writer, had some knowledge of them. Her father's experiences and writings may have entered into her conversations with Lawrence.

If we accept the broadly autobiographical nature of *Kangaroo* there is possible further evidence of Lawrence's increased awareness of Australia during the war. In the retrospective chapter "The Nightmare," Richard Somers recalls from Australia his earlier

<sup>24</sup> Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), pp. 2, 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, pp. 267-268.

hopes that he might visit Australia during a conversation with the Cornishman John Thomas:

‘One day, when the war ends, before long,’ said Somers as they climbed behind the trap in the sun, past the still-flickering gorse-bushes, ‘we’ll go far across the sea – to Mexico – to Australia – and try living there. You must come too, and we’ll have a farm.’ (K, 239:11-14)

There is no contemporaneous evidence that Lawrence articulated this sentiment during the war and in *Kangaroo* he may have been “back-filling” Australia (and indeed Mexico) into his wartime desire to travel abroad. On the other hand, it may be that Lawrence did have a similar conversation with the Cornishman, William Henry Hocking, the inspiration for John Thomas, whom Lawrence mentions in August 1916, and whose intellect he sought to nurture (ii. 642-643). Lawrence had by this period read some of Frazer’s anthropological work on Australia (ii. 470), and had read Grant Watson’s *Where Bonds Are Loosed*, and *Moby-Dick* earlier that year. The two men may have speculated about Australia.

#### *Lawrence Tilts Towards Australia*

A pronounced “tilt” towards Australia is evidenced by Lawrence’s insertion of Australian characters into *The Lost Girl*, and *Aaron’s Rod*, which were published in 1920 and 1922 respectively. It seems that Lawrence was reaching back to his mid-war engagement with Australia and beginning to re-fashion a deeper vision of the country. There is no other obvious explanation for the appearance of Australian characters in these novels. During the five months prior to his leaving Europe in 1922, Lawrence lived in Sicily at the Fontana Vecchia. In a photograph of the villa, the contemporary view “from the balcony” is framed by branches of a eucalyptus tree (TE, plate 61), and Lawrence reported Australian mimosa blooms in a letter to Thomas Seltzer in January 1921 (iii. 646). Mimosa was to become one of his favourite plants and Lawrence recorded them vividly in *Kangaroo*. We can speculate that Lawrence may have associated these Australian plants with their country of origin, that they further aroused his interest in Australia. In any case it is clear that Lawrence had a strong interest in Australia well before he embarked, and it was in Sicily that Lawrence

decided, after much prevarication, to finally leave Europe, and embark on a journey which would take him around the world to Australia.

Recent biographers David Ellis (*DG*, 13), John Worthen,<sup>27</sup> and Michael Squires and Lynn K. Talbot<sup>28</sup> associate Lawrence's decision to visit Australia with his meeting of an Australian woman, Mrs Annie Jenkins on board RMS *Osterley* en route to Ceylon. There is, however, compelling evidence that, in addition to Lawrence's increasing engagement with Australia evident since the beginning of the war, Australia figured in Lawrence's mind persistently over the four months *immediately prior* to his embarkation from Europe. Furthermore, the curiosity about Australia influenced Lawrence's decision to delay his visit to America, and to approach that continent from the East, rather than from Europe. In the months leading up to his departure, Lawrence's letters reveal his agonising over whether he should travel to America at all, and if so, from which direction. In August 1921 Lawrence wrote of his "strong distaste for Yankees," that "wild horses wouldn't drag" him to America, but regrettably it was "a *pis aller*" – he must eventually go there (*iv*. 67). On 5 November he received an invitation from Mabel Sterne to stay with her in Taos, New Mexico (*iv*. 110). On 27 January Lawrence informed her: "I *will* come. But a detour. I am writing to book berths on the *Osterley* from Naples, Feby. 26<sup>th</sup>. for Colombo, Ceylon," he wrote (*iv*. 181). He had conclusively delayed his journey to America. Lawrence wrote that he would come "only via the East. There is something will not let me sail west for America" (*iv*. 181). Australia was to form part of the "detour" through the "East." Meanwhile Lawrence worked on his *Studies in Classic American Literature* right up until his departure in February 1922 (*iv*. 197). There is, however, a simultaneous Australian strand to Lawrence's life during this pre-embarkation period. On 17 October 1921 Lawrence wrote to Edward Garnett: "Do please send me that "Primrose Path" story," it "has never been published and is probably good for a hundred dollars in America" (*iv*. 100). The story was assembled at the end of 1921 into the collection which became *England, My England* (1922). "The Primrose Path," as I have already discussed, begins with the protagonist, Daniel Sutton, freshly returned to England from Australia. "You want to come out to Sydney with me, lad. That's the place for you—beautiful place, oh you could wish for nothing better – beautiful place." Sutton says to his nephew (*EME*, 123:32-33,

<sup>27</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, p. 261.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Squires and Lynn K. Talbot, *Living at the Edge: A Biography of D. H. Lawrence and Frieda von Richthofen* (London: Robert Hale, 2002), p. 251.



124:1). The story is doubly important because of its biographical element, for Sutton, as Bruce Steele explains, “is closely based” on Lawrence’s “maternal uncle, Herbert Beardsall” (*EME*, 246). And in manuscript, the nephew was, like Lawrence, named “David” (*EME*, 246). Lawrence revised this story between receiving it on 10 November 1921 (*iv*. 115), and before sending it to his publishers early in December (*EME*, xlv). Although Lawrence had revised this tale in November 1921 (*EME*, xlv), after completing *Aaron’s Rod*, with its positive Australian character, Francis Dekker, whom I will discuss in chapter 4, perusal of the textual apparatus reveals that the negative portrayal of Australia was present in the earlier drafts (*EME* 273-275). We should not, however, be surprised that Lawrence retained his earlier negative attitude to Australia in his revision of “The Primrose Path.” To have done otherwise would have been to destroy a key element of the tale as it was originally conceived. Tired as Lawrence was of Europe, Sutton’s injunction to his nephew, now a very different Lawrence to the one of 1913, to make for Australia, must have struck a new resonance with Lawrence at this time. “Thank heaven I need not look north, towards England or Europe” he wrote in the same letter in which he requested “The Primrose Path” (*iv*. 100). In another letter the next day Lawrence wrote that Europe was “dying,” and that when he left “Europe,” he wanted “to go forever” (*iv*. 102).

There is a further reason for us to infer that Australia figured in Lawrence’s yearnings just before he left Europe. Lawrence’s friends Earl and Achsah Brewster, with whom he had become friends in Italy, had wanted him to accompany them to Ceylon when they had departed in late October 1921 (*iv*. 96). Lawrence followed their voyage keenly, and in doing so found reference to Australia. On 2 November 1921, Lawrence replied to a joke of Earl’s about some Australians Earl Brewster had met on board his ship. Lawrence wrote: “The ship sounds rather fun, if rather awful. Of course I should have to make those Australian two-legged organs tune up a bit if I was there. I believe they think they are most awfully IT” (*iv*. 108). It is not clear exactly what Lawrence means here. Perhaps it is a comment on Australian bravado, but Lawrence’s light-hearted engagement with Australia just before he began revision of “The Primrose Path” points to a continuing intensification of his interest in the country in the lead up to his departure. On 18 January 1922 Lawrence told Brewster, now in Ceylon, that while his “arrangements” for America were made, he felt “ridiculous, wavering between east and west,” that he “shall not go to America” and that he was “writing about ships to Colombo” (*iv*. 171). Importantly, Lawrence’s enquiries were to reveal that Australia might also be appended to a journey to Ceylon. Several weeks

later, on 19 February 1922, he wrote to his mother-in-law, advising her of his and Frieda's final travel arrangements. They would board the R. M. S. *Osterley* for Ceylon on Sunday 26 February. While Lawrence wrote excitedly of "palms and elephants and apes," he also wrote: "The ship goes on, to Australia" (iv. 199). Why should Lawrence add this detail? – he does not elaborate in his letter. It seems likely that he had already, if only privately, earmarked Australia as a likely destination, either when he requested the manuscript of "The Primrose Path," on 17 October 1921, or by the time he had revised it in early December, by which time he had also joked about Australians in his letter to Brewster. Critically, this was before 27 January, when Lawrence informed Mabel Sterne of his intention to delay his visit to America and that he would "book births on the *Osterley*" (iv. 181). It is also important to note that Lawrence was also ambivalent about Ceylon, that he had been "so *spiteful* against Bhudda [sic]" (iv. 170). The ability to "go on to Australia," therefore, may also have influenced Lawrence's decision to travel to Ceylon. In any case, it is apparent that Lawrence's interest in Australia was well-developed in the months leading up to his departure from Europe. This helps to explain his attraction to Australians on board ship.

According to the account reproduced in Edward Nehls's biography, the Lawrences met the Australian, Mrs Anna Jenkins, soon after embarkation from Naples, and were placed at her table.<sup>29</sup> Lawrence asked Jenkins "a tremendous number of questions about Australia," and Frieda reported the excitement of "'people going to Australia full of the wonder that was coming to them.'" <sup>30</sup> Rather than igniting in Lawrence a desire to travel to Australia, Mrs Jenkins, and others on the ship, appear to have fanned an existing flame of interest into a greater conflagration. By the middle of what was clearly an immensely enjoyable passage to Ceylon, Australia was even more firmly lodged in Lawrence's mind. He wrote to his friend Koteliansky on 7 March: "I spend the day talking small-talk with Australians on board –rather nice people" (iv. 208). By the next day Australia loomed larger still. On 8 March he wrote to Rosalind Baynes:

The people on board are mostly simple Australians. I believe Australia is a good country, full of life and energy. I believe that is the country for

<sup>29</sup> Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 2 1919-1925 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), pp. 115-116.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 116, 117.

you if you had anything specific in mind. If we don't want to go on living in Ceylon I shall go to Australia if I can manage it. (iv. 213)

Again, as in his letter to May Holbrook ten years earlier, Lawrence advocates Australia as a migrant destination. Australia in being "the country for" Rosalind Baynes, now emerges as potentially "the country for" D. H. Lawrence, already supplanting Ceylon, his ostensible destination. And Lawrence seems to have intuited that he would not find Ceylon to his taste. In subsequent letters, both before and after his experience of Ceylon, Lawrence increasingly looked to Australia as a place of promise. Soon after arriving in Kandy he revealed to Robert Mountsier that his stay in Ceylon would be short lived and that he would move on to Australia:

[...]I doubt if I shall stay very long in Ceylon. Probably in a few months move to Australia—and then finally from Sydney to San Francisco.

I want to have a letter of credit for \$1000, good for here and for Australia. Here the bank is the National Bank of India, Kandy. In Australia I don't know – but I shall call at Perth, in West Australia, and go on to Kandy [sic].<sup>31</sup> (iv. 214)

Here we find Lawrence's eventual journey clearly mapped out. He will travel to Australia before moving on to America. It is important to acknowledge that at this early point, Lawrence was not considering a long-term stay in Australia. We must remember, however, that Lawrence always kept his options open. He had already changed his plans for America and his stay in Ceylon was shorter than originally planned. And he booked his travel in stages – Italy to Ceylon, Ceylon to Fremantle and Sydney, and finally Sydney to San Francisco. At any time he might remain as long as he wished.

Less than a week after writing to Mountsier from Ceylon, Lawrence wrote to Anna Jenkins, who was now home in Australia, quite excited – perhaps desperate, to get to Australia:

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<sup>31</sup> Although not noted in the Cambridge *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Lawrence clearly meant to write "Sydney." He had no plan to backtrack to Ceylon.

My mind turns towards Australia. Shall we really come and try West? I have a fancy for the apple-growing regions, south from Perth: have a great fancy to see apple trees in blossom: and to be really 'white'. I feel absolutely dead of Buddhism[...].

Tell me if you think we *should* like W. Australia –if not we'll go straight to Sydney. (iv. 218)

Clearly, in Lawrence's mind, after the tropics, Australia looked attractive. The apple trees promised familiarity, and the replication of European vegetation and an English farm were appealing. He "loathe[d] the tropical fruits" of Ceylon (iv. 224). Lawrence, however, forgot the seasonal reversal in the Southern Hemisphere and thought he would be arriving in late Spring and find apple blossom. Importantly, he hoped to feel "white" again, in Australia, a land of white, overwhelmingly British migrants, away from the "dark people" who "jeer at" him (iv. 225). In twenty-nine of the thirty-five letters Lawrence wrote after arriving in Ceylon, he confirmed his optimism at the prospect of his visit to Australia (iv. 214-235).

### *First Impressions*

Lawrence and Frieda landed in Fremantle, the port of Perth, on 4 May 1922 and Lawrence was rudely cured of his "illusion" of Australia. In his first lines written from Australia Lawrence wrote:

Well here we are – landed today on same boat as Annie Besant. Seems a queer godforsaken place: not so much new as non-existent, in the real sense: though they call themselves very 'alive'. Air beautiful and pure and sky fresh, high – that part really good. Dont [sic] know how long I shall stay – probably go on to Sydney in about a fortnight. (iv. 235)

Immediately we find the polarity evident in much of Lawrence's post-arrival writing about Australia – the promise and beauty offered by the natural environment, and the emptiness of the society constructed within it. Despite the hospitality he received in Western Australia, particularly from Mollie Skinner, his future collaborator in *The Boy in the Bush*,

Lawrence informed his mother-in-law that he was restless in the West and looking forward to sailing on for Sydney (*iv.* 238). In a letter to Earl Brewster back in Ceylon Lawrence explained his reaction to Western Australia, limited as it was to the port of Fremantle, the capital city Perth, and a small piece of hinterland. He was largely demoralised, and felt that there was no meaningful activity in Australia beyond the survival of the human species:

Apples ripe and good, also pears. And we could have a nice little bungalow – but – But – BUT – Well it's always an anticlimax of butts. I just don't want to stay, that's all. It is *so* democratic, it feels to me *infra* dig. In *so* free a land, it is humiliating to keep house and cook still another mutton-chop. (*iv.* 239)

In this passage, Lawrence has a “migrant’s-eye” view of his new surroundings. The produce is good and the housing affordable. One might have “a nice little bungalow,” but Lawrence demands that the spirit be nourished as well. After two weeks in Western Australia Lawrence boarded the S. S. *Malwa* for Sydney. While it appears that Lawrence spent much of his journey to Ceylon talking to Australians, between Fremantle and Sydney he occupied his time with people from the British Isles, and Lawrence’s journey to Australia thereby intersected with the broader movement of contemporary British migration to Australia. He met two British migrant couples, the Forresters and the Marchbankses both of whom, by an extraordinary coincidence, also came from around Nottingham.<sup>32</sup> Lawrence also had conversations on the *Malwa* with a Scot, John Elder Walker, who was “considering emigration to Australia or New Zealand” (*K*, xx). It is not surprising, therefore, that Lawrence informed Robert Mountsier of the overpowering air of commercial inactivity “in Melbourne harbour” with its “rows and rows of steamers laid up” and “immigrants rolling in, and a laborer demanding his pound a day or 25/-” (*iv.* 246). Before arriving in Sydney Lawrence informed Koteliensky: “I think from Sydney we shall visit the South Sea Islands – think of our ‘Rananim’” (*iv.* 241). Rananim, apparently, was not to be found in Australia – or was it? In typically contradictory fashion Lawrence wrote to Robert Mountsier a few days later, just short of his arrival in Sydney:

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<sup>32</sup> Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 2, p. 141.

I doubt if I shall ever like Australia. The country is rather wonderful, with its clear sky and air and sense of emptiness. If I were chucking up the literary sponge, and turning my back on the world, and going to live just for my own sake and pleasantness, I'd stop in Australia. One could live in the bush for next to nothing, and a great free land. But I suppose I must hang on at least till I've tried America. The sense of futility grows – and it's nice to know there is this country – the North West particularly – where one could lose oneself away from the world. (iv. 245)

This letter again reveals the initial ambivalence Lawrence felt towards Australia. Importantly, he praises the landscape at the expense of the “Australia” the country. The appeal of Australia is impossibly conditioned by his assertion that he would throw in “the literary sponge” – not likely in Lawrence's case. In “the North West,” however, far from Australian civilisation, there remained the possibility of Rananim. In *The Boy in the Bush*, through Jack Grant, a young English migrant, partly a young Lawrence, explores the possibility of establishing a utopian community in the north-west of Western Australia. “I want to go up to the North-West and raise cattle” Jack asserts (*BB*, 329:9).

Lawrence's decision to travel to Australia was informed by his longstanding interest in Australia stimulated by literature and anthropology, and his association with people with connections to Australia, including a member of his own family whose experience appears to have been problematic. His early, largely positive impressions and evocations of Australia also occur in the wider context of British socio-political relations with Australia and widely-held assumptions in both countries that British migration to Australia should be encouraged. Australia, therefore, offered the possibility not only of idealised Rananim, but mainstream emigration and settlement.

In forthcoming chapters I will explore Lawrence's fictional engagement with Australia from his first mention of the country, to his last. Australia is one of Lawrence's many struggles. Lawrence's Australia is an unstable, shifting entity, both frustrating and endearing. In one breath, he finds it degenerative and threatening, in another regenerative and impossibly beautiful. In many respects this is explained by the clash between his pre-conceptions of Australia, which were largely positive, and the realities of the Australian society he found in 1922.

4. AUSTRALIA ON THE HORIZON: "THE VICAR'S GARDEN," *THE WHITE PEACOCK*, "THE PRIMROSE PATH," *THE LOST GIRL*, *AARON'S ROD*, AND *MR NOON*

This chapter examines Lawrence's fictional engagement with Australia before his visit in 1922, and therefore before he wrote his "Australian" novels *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), and before *St. Mawr* (1925), which with its Australian characters should also be included in Lawrence's Australian *oeuvre*. "The Vicar's Garden" (2009), written in 1907, introduces Lawrence's first fictional engagement with Australia. *The White Peacock* (1911), "The Primrose Path" (1922), written in 1913, *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Aaron's Rod* (1922), and *Mr Noon* (1984), abandoned in 1922, are not normally noted for their Australian content. Lawrence, however, in these works, presents a range of images of Australia which reveal his escalating interest in the possibility that Australia could offer a site for personal regeneration. These largely positive "pre-Australian" texts contrast sharply with the disappointed picture of Australia Lawrence portrays in his later Australian work, particularly *Kangaroo*, written during and after his visit. In *The Boy in the Bush*, Lawrence returned to a more optimistic, utopian vision of Australia outside colonial society. By early 1922, we may discern a concentration of Lawrence's engagement with Australia in his fiction. There is a distinct "Australian Period," beginning in early 1920 with *The Lost Girl*, through February 1921 when he had completed all he would write of *Mr Noon*, to May 1921, when he completed *Aaron's Rod*, through to December 1921, when he revised "The Primrose Path" for publication. Following his major Australian novels, the "Australian Period" concludes with *St. Mawr*, where Lawrence tartly satirises Australian colonials living in England. The works examined in this chapter suggest that Lawrence, in self-imposed exile after the trauma of the war, and with his vision of *Rananim* still unrealised, had become sufficiently curious about Australia for it to have been a factor in his decision in January 1922 to delay his journey to America, and approach that continent "from the east" (iv. 168) – that is the Asian side, and via Australia, which I outlined in the preceding chapter.

In texts written prior to his visit, Lawrence presents Australia and Australians in a positive light. His impressions gained from romantic fiction, anthropology and personal accounts appear to have coalesced into a view that Australian civilisation might be a

regenerative alternative to European civilisation. "The Primrose Path" is an important exception. Its thematic origins in Lawrence family history probably contributes to the deeply ambivalent view of Sydney found in the story, but the tale also reflects Lawrence's concomitant early doubts about aspects of the cultures which were developing in new world societies. This is also apparent in Lawrence's handling of migration in "Samson and Delilah" and "Hadrian." It remains significant, however, that after "The Primrose Path," while Lawrence continues to display doubts about Canada and America as regenerative destinations, and indecision about range of other destinations, Australia holds promise until the time of his visit.

*"The Vicar's Garden: " Dying of Thirst in Australia*

"The Vicar's Garden" is one of a group of five of Lawrence's earliest surviving short stories which were written in the latter part of 1907 (*VGOS*, xix). It is an early version of "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" (1914), which itself was published in two versions (*VGOS*, xx). Only "The Vicar's Garden" contains a reference to Australia. In "The Vicar's Garden" a couple ramble by the seaside and come across a vicarage garden resplendent with roses. The woman is transported, and fancies she might thrive in such a place. "I have never been so happy" (*WGOS*, 7:21-22), she remarks. The first person narrator counters with an air of foreboding: "She, however, had not looked across at the sea and I felt again its immense mystery and aloofness" (*WGOS*, 7:23-24). The story ends with the revelation by the couple's landlady that the vicar can not bear to live at the vicarage. His mad son inhabits the place. And another of his sons died far across the sea. "He went to Australia, a wild country, and got lost in the bushes, and wandered round and round, but there's no water there, so he died of thirst, ay, very sad, very sad.' The old lady wiped away a tear 'And they were all he had,'" the landlady tells them (*WGOS*, 8:7-11). The story does not reveal what the son was actually doing in Australia, and his dying of thirst is thereby rendered symbolic. Australia is emblematic of extreme remoteness, and, as I have already noted, Lawrence inherits from Dickens and Hardy the trope of Australia as a convenient disposal point for characters. The image of deadly thirst also points to the European explorers who perished in their fruitless searches for productive land in the Australian interior in the nineteenth century. "The bushes," the Australian bush, is a barren place, hostile to English men, in contrast to the narrator's evocation of the English coast as



“Paradise Regained” (*WGOS*, 5:17). There is also something futile, and grimly comic and melodramatic about the son’s going “round and round” in Australia, which undercuts the apparent tragedy of the situation. The beneficent vicar’s garden is, therefore, blighted by its association with the unforgiving harshness of a slightly absurd Australia, and the narrator observes wryly: “The honeymoon will not, I fear, be spent by that bonny northern bay” (*WGOS*, 8:12-13). Why did Lawrence introduce Australia into this very early story? The answer may lie with geography. The story was inspired by his visit to Robin Hood’s Bay in August 1907 (*WGOS*, xix). On a postcard sent from the village to Mabel Limb, he wrote: “This place is charming – a wide bay with two bold headlands and a sea of changing colour” (*i.* 35). And Lawrence appears to have been greatly stimulated artistically by this piece of coast and its hinterland. His letters to the Chambers family suggested to Mrs Chambers that “he must be writing a book,” and she concluded, proleptically: “With his ideas, he could set the world on fire” (*i.* 36). Significantly, Lawrence also visited Whitby and the surrounding moors, where he “walked about 5 miles picnicking” (*i.* 36). It was in Whitby that Captain James Cook, the English explorer of the east coast of Australia, was apprenticed. The present memorial to Cook in Whitby, erected in 1912,<sup>1</sup> could not have been seen by Lawrence, but it is possible that Lawrence learned of Cook’s association with Whitby during his visit, or that he knew of it from school and was reminded of it when he visited. There is also a 16 meter high obelisk erected in 1827, commemorating Cook’s voyages, positioned near Great Ayton on Easby Moor,<sup>2</sup> inland from Whitby, but there is no evidence that Lawrence visited it during his walk on the moors. Lawrence, however, knew of Cook’s association with Australia and was fascinated by his exploits. In *Kangaroo*, Somers, walking in “the Palace Gardens,” contemplates Sydney Harbour, finding it “wild, lost and undiscovered, as it was in Captain Cook’s time” (*K*, 305:16, 22-23). Several years after his visit to Australia, in a letter to Alfred and Blanche Knopf in 1925, Lawrence alluded favourable to a volume of “*Cook’s Voyages*,” offering to review it (v. 321).

While we can not be certain that Lawrence associated Whitby and the surrounding moors with Cook and Australia, it seems more than coincidental that in “The Vicar’s Garden” the vicar’s son, like Cook, dies, if somewhat less gloriously, at the other end of the

<sup>1</sup> See Mona Gordon, “Captain Cook Memorials – A Centenary Gesture?” in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Volume 14, Issue 2 (May 1, 1939), pp. 53, 51, [http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Gov14\\_02Rail-t1-body-d17.html](http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Gov14_02Rail-t1-body-d17.html).

<sup>2</sup> Article in Wapedia: Wiki. Great Ayton, [http://wapedia.mobi/en/Great\\_Ayton](http://wapedia.mobi/en/Great_Ayton).

earth, in Australia. And whatever the stimulus to Lawrence, the tale asserts that it is folly to leave the rich and fecund serenity of the Yorkshire coast for the dangers of a distant Australia. This is the voice of the young Lawrence, articulated many years before his disillusionment associated with World War I, where England is celebrated unequivocally, and Australia does not yet hold the promise found in his post-war novels, which preceded his visit in 1922.

*The White Peacock: A Return from a Remote Australia*

In 1911 Lawrence published his first novel, *The White Peacock*. The novel had a long gestation, Lawrence having begun it in 1906 (*WP*, xvii). *The White Peacock* contains much that is central and enduring in Lawrence's work – his interest in the relationship between men and women, his celebrations of the English rural landscape, and his condemnation of industrial society. *The White Peacock* also heralds Lawrence's first published fictional engagement with Australia available to readers until the publication of "The Vicar's Garden" in 2009, and it develops the idea, asserted in the tale, that Australia is remote, and hostile, and oppositional to England. For the purposes of this discussion, the novel's importance is centred on Annable, a gamekeeper, a prototype for Mellors, the gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). John Worthen observes that "the figure of Annable stands as the first in a line of opponents and outsiders in Lawrence's fiction" (*EY*, 227). He is "distrusted by both his employer and by his original class" (*EY*, 228). Annable is the enemy of the Saxtons, who are small farmers, because he guards the squire's rabbits which are ravaging their farm, and there are "rumours" that his death "was revenge" by the community (*WP*, 154:37). Annable is a straw man, "at best a literary device, an idea of something other and dangerous and necessary," and he is killed off in the novel (*EY*, 228). In a sense, however, Annable is killed off twice, and it is his first "death" which is of interest here. In conversation with Cyril, the Lawrentian protagonist, Annable reveals the Hardy-esque intrigue surrounding his exit from his first marriage to Lady Chrystabel:

I was seen in France—then in Australia—though I never left England. I was supposed to have died in the bush. She married a young fellow. Then I was proved to have died, and I read a little obituary on myself in a Woman's paper she subscribed to. (*WP*, 151:4-7)

Like Dickens and Hardy, Lawrence portrays a character with the disquieting capacity to unexpectedly and unpleasantly return to the mother land. Annable's return to Australia is, we may infer, as inconvenient for Lady Chrystabel as Magwitch's is in *Great Expectations* and Arabella's is in *Jude the Obscure*. Annable is "seen" in Australia and "supposed to have died in the bush." Australia is so far away, the novel suggests, that we cannot be sure of facts. As a gamekeeper, Annable is a man of the woods - he might have become a bushman in Australia. Readers of the "Woman's paper," we are invited to imagine, would have thrilled at his brave and tragic passing in the Australian bush. Annable, as Cyril recounts "was a man of one idea:—that all civilisation was the painted fungus of rottenness. He hated any sign of culture" (*WP*, 151:28-29). Annable's later "real" death represents the death of this "materialist" (*WP*, 146:32) and unspiritual view of the world. With Annable, Lawrence makes an early exploration of an alternative to modern industrial man. Annable, however, has little of the regenerative moral purpose which Lawrence was to invest in his later gamekeeper, Mellors. Importantly, Australia in Lawrence's first evocation, is rendered "other" in Edward Said's sense, a reversal of England, and Annable is, by association with Australia, not merely an "outsider" as Worthen notes, but oppositional. For Lawrence at this time, Australia serves primarily as a convenient point of disposal. It is a remote and vague entity characterised by "the bush." Australia does not yet hold the promise of another new world destination which seems to have appealed to Lawrence, Canada, "where work is strenuous, but not life" (*WP*, 59:32). Unlike in some later tales, British migration to the colonies is a potentially positive outcome in Lawrence's first novel. Cyril's friend George Saxton considers that he might leave the cosy intimacy of his family and community, and emigrate to Canada (*WP*, 64:29-30). Unlike Australia, however, Canada did not occupy an enduring place in Lawrence's utopian imagination.

*"The Primrose Path: " A Modern and Degenerate Australia*

"The Primrose Path" has been seen as one of Lawrence's lesser works. A contemporary reviewer, the novelist and critic Rebecca West, described the tale as ending "with the most incredible artlessness."<sup>3</sup> More recently it has been described by Mark Kinkead-Weekes as

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<sup>3</sup> Rebecca West quoted in Bruce Steele, "Introduction," *England, My England and Other Stories*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. xxx.

“far from Lawrence’s best” (*TE*, 686), and by Michael Bell as one of the “slighter” tales in *England My England*.<sup>4</sup> The tale is remarkable in three respects. First, its chilling portrayal of Maud’s “consumption of the throat” (*EME*, 130:32), heralds Lawrence’s concern with the disease well over a decade before he himself was diagnosed. More significantly, through his critique of both Australia and England, neither of which are presented in a positive light, Lawrence engages contemporary degenerationist anxieties. This leads directly to the tale’s third area of interest, Lawrence’s discussion of Australia as a place of migration. Critics have overlooked the tale’s themes of degeneration and migration. In “The Primrose Path,” as I have noted, Lawrence recreates his prodigal uncle, Herbert Beardsall, as Daniel Sutton. Like Sutton, Herbert Beardsall left his wife to emigrate to Australia, returning to run a taxi business in Nottingham (*EME*, 246). Kinkead-Weekes observes that the story is based on “family gossip” and was perhaps also stimulated by Lawrence’s own return for his sister’s wedding (*TE*, 90). The tale’s theme of migration, occurring about a year after Lawrence’s enthusiastic endorsement of May Holbrook’s emigration proposal, noted in chapter 3, points to Lawrence’s deepening interest in the subject. With “The Primrose Path,” Lawrence introduces Australia as a potential, if problematic, migrant destination.

“The Primrose Path” begins at Victoria Station, Nottingham, with Daniel Berry meeting Sutton. The uncle is gruffly friendly, but clearly disgruntled:

‘How are you, lad?’

‘All right, I thought you were in Australia.’

‘Been back three months—bought a couple of these damned things—’

He kicked the tyre of his taxicab in affectionate disgust. There was a moment’s silence.

‘Oh, but I’m going back out there. I can’t stand this cankering rotten-hearted hell of a country any more.—You want to come out to Sydney with me, lad. That’s the place for you—beautiful place, oh, you could wish for nothing better. And money in it too.’ (*EME*, 123:24-33, 125:1)

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Bell, “Introduction,” *England, My England and Other Stories*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed. Bruce Steele (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. xxiv.

Sutton contrasts the physical beauty and financial promise of Sydney with the unrelieved hopelessness of provincial England. He remarks:

‘You’ve only got to look at the folk in the street to know there’s nothing keeps it going but gravitation. Look at ‘em. Look at him!—A mongrel-looking man was nosing past. Wouldn’t he murder you for your watch-chain, but that he’s afraid of society.’ (*EME*, 124:27-30)

The nephew begins to share his uncle’s point of view, seeing his surroundings in a new, degenerate light: “Berry watched the townspeople go by[...]it seemed he was watching a sort of *danse macabre* of ugly criminals” (*EME*, 124:32-4). The narrator describes the new suburb developing adjacent to where Sutton lives with his new partner as “a kind of unresolved borderland” (*EME*, 132:21). The tale offers no alternative to this deeply pessimistic view of England. Its concern with urban degeneration shows Lawrence, in 1913, re-expressing the degenerationist concerns about slum life evident in his “Stockport and Manchester” letter of 1908 (*i.* 80). Against this background, it would seem that the tale should endorse emigration to Australia as an act of regeneration, as Sutton himself urges. He has, after all, returned successfully and bought his taxi business. We learn, however, that Sutton’s sojourn in Australia has been a near disaster. His apparent success is ironised by the baseness of his motives:

In the end he fell absurdly and violently in love with a rather sentimental young woman who read Browning. He made his wife an allowance, and established a new ménage with the young lady, shortly after emigrating with her to Australia. (*EME*, 127: 14-17)

The woman he forsook his wife for, fell for someone else on the boat to Australia and she tried to poison Sutton (*EME*, 127:7, 19-20). He then returned to England and found his wife dying, and began a new relationship with a third, much younger woman, with whom he is very rough. Berry becomes aware that his uncle is self-centred and “bullied everybody” (*EME*, 134:1). Through his aggression and his problematic affairs with women it emerges that Sutton is in his own way as degenerate as the urban mob he reviles. While Sutton’s appraisal of Sydney as a “beautiful place” (*EME*, 123:33), accords some allure to

Australia, and suggests a cautious curiosity in Lawrence, there being “money in it, too” (*EME*, 123:40-124:1), throws a crass light over Sydney. Sutton’s emphasis on the financial benefits associated with Australia aligns him with the materialistic preoccupations of modern man – a type so deplored by Lawrence. In “Men Must Work and Women as Well,” for example, Lawrence condemns “the present stream of progress towards better business and better jobs (*P II*, 582). It is not surprising, therefore, that the nephew Berry, the Lawrence figure, does not respond to the material attractions of Sydney as recounted by his uncle. Sutton has returned a dullard and a brute. His kicking of his cab in “affectionate disgust” shows that while he feels a dim sense of his enslavement to the machine, it is not sufficient to cast it off. Sutton’s mechanistic orientation is reflected in his emotions. When Sutton takes Berry to visit his dying wife Maud, who asks the estranged Sutton to take care of their daughter (*EME*, 130:35), in his departure Sutton displays a literally mechanical response: “Sutton aimed his car like a projectile, staring ahead. He did not want to know, to think, to realise, he wanted to be only the driver of that quick taxi” (*EME*, 131:35-36). The taxis are Sutton’s legacy from Australia, and emblematic of modernity. Australia is thereby implicated in Sutton’s condition. Sutton is, through his love of his taxi, modernised – and to that extent, Australianised. He no longer fits into England. ““Oh, but I’m going back out there. I can’t stand this cankering, rotten-hearted hell of a country any more,”” he moans (*EME*, 123:31-32). The tale’s power, therefore, lies in its critique of degenerate tendencies in both England and Australia. It is remarkable that Lawrence adopts this dual critique well before his journey to Australia. Tony Pinkney, writing of *Kangaroo*, observes that for Lawrence Australia represents “a much accelerated version of contemporary trends within the home culture,” and that novel’s “The Nightmare” and depiction of the collapse of London are, Pinkney argues “in a sense the Australianisation of London.”<sup>5</sup> We may usefully apply Pinkney’s observations to “The Primrose Path.” Daniel Sutton, therefore, constitutes a threat to the health of an already ailing England. His return is problematic, like Dickens’s Magwitch. Significantly, the brutish Australian Jack Callcott in *Kangaroo*, who “was a foreman in a motor-works place” (*K*, 24:18), bears a strong resemblance to Sutton, indicating that Lawrence’s early negative view of the “modern” mechanical element in Australian society, following his subsequent hopes in the lead up to his visit, was ultimately vindicated.

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<sup>5</sup> Tony Pinkney, *D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 113, 116.

In addition to “The Primrose Path” two other of Lawrence’s tales written between 1913 and 1919, “Samson and Delilah,” and “Hadrian,” collected in *England, My England and Other Stories* (1922) demonstrate the persistence in Lawrence’s mind of problems associated with emigration – although not to Australia. As with “The Primrose Path,” in these two tales emigration is implicated in the degenerate, materialistic elements in English society rather than serving as a panacea for England’s social ills. In addition to Australia, Lawrence locates the new world societies of America and Canada in a problematic industrial modernity, seeing them as attracting the self-seeking and bullying elements of English society. It is instructive to consider “The Primrose Path” in this wider context. In both “Samson and Delilah” and “Hadrian,” emigrants also return to England, with unsettling consequences. One is again reminded of this theme in Dickens and Hardy. In “Samson and Delilah,” written in 1916, Willie Nankervis returns unannounced to Cornwall, after sixteen years in America, to be reunited with his wife who has remained in England. A crucial part of his justification in seeking to re-enter her life is that he has made money in mines in America: ““And don’t you think I’ve come back here a-begging,” he said. “I’ve more than *one* thousand pounds to my name, I have”” (*EME*, 122:31-32). His overtures are hardly flattering:

‘Darn me if I could find a woman in all the darn States as could get me down like that. Wonderful fine woman you be, truth to say, at this minute.’ She only sat glowering into the fire.’ (*EME*, 122: 22-25)

This is doubly insensitive since Mrs Nankervis has already expressed horror at the moral conditions in American mining camps. In appealing to a soldier to assist with ejecting Nankervis, she pleads:

‘Are we going to be done like this, Sergeant Thomas, by a scoundrel and a bully as has led a life beyond *mention*, in those American mining camps, and then wants to come back and make havoc of a poor woman’s life and savings,’[...]. (*EME*, 116:35-38)

Like Sutton’s in “The Primrose Path,” Nankervis’s return is problematic. His selfishness and materialism have been accentuated in America, and he has become Americanised. He

is not only wealthy but he also dresses like an American: “He wore a well-cut, well-fitting suit of dark-grey, American in style, and a turn down collar” (*EME*, 114:27-28).

In “Hadrian” Matilda is punished by her father for her lack of affection towards him by being forced to marry Hadrian, who as a boy, her father “adopted[...]out of a Charity Institution” (*EME*, 93:26). Hadrian is never accepted by Matilda or her sister Emmie, who from the outset regard him as “sly” (*EME*, 94:5). At “fifteen he announced that he wanted to leave England to go to the Colonies” (*EME*, 94:19-20). He went “to Canada under the protection of the Institution to which he belonged” (*EME*, 94:23-24, 20). Lawrence’s linking of “Canada” and “Institution” suggests that Canada serves as a convenient dumping ground for the rejects from English society. As in “The Primrose Path,” there is scant information about the foreign destination. What is important, however, is that like Australia, Canada represents industrial modernity. Like Daniel Sutton with his taxi, earned from his labours in Sydney, Hadrian is mechanically and materially oriented, and succeeds in Canada through having “entered some electricity works near Montreal” (*EME*, 94:28-29). And, like Sutton and Nankervis, Hadrian is financially better off, but morally weakened by his experience of a new world society. He is a low type who has not risen in his new environment, but merely performed the role allocated to him by industrial society. He comes back to England to dutifully enlist in the War. There is a “curious neatness about him that still suggested the Charity Institution” (*EME*, 95:13-14). Throughout the tale Lawrence reminds us of the nexus between Hadrian’s institutional origins and his colonial aspirations as a way of reinforcing his undesirable qualities. He intends returning to Canada (*EME*, 97:11), but remains a “charity-boy” (*EME*, 98:1), an “indomitable, dangerous charity boy” (*EME*, 104:37-38). Hadrian’s tainting by institution and colony are a vital part of Matilda’s revulsion towards him. It is these elements in him which contribute to his not being “decent” (*EME*, 106:23) in her view. It is utterly humiliating, the tale insists, that Matilda, although now an old maid, and therefore herself marginalised, should have to resort to emigration with a man such as Hadrian:

‘Let us marry and go out to Canada—you might as well—you’ve touched me.’  
She was white and trembling. Suddenly she flushed with anger.  
‘It’s so *indecent*,’ she said. (*EME*, 106:29-33)



Matilda's eventual cold acceptance of Hadrian, the joyless marriage at the registry office, and her sealing of the grim bargain through her obedient kissing of both her dying father and Hadrian, is a kind of death, rather than the beginning of a regenerative relationship in a new world society far from England.

The ambivalence towards emigration in these tales is striking, given Lawrence's later desperate desire to leave England and his eventual self-imposed exile. All the more so when we consider that Lawrence, soon after the outbreak of World War I, saw America as offering great promise, and explored the idea of living in Florida (ii. 428-432). The theme of migration in these tales, and in Lawrence's work in general, has not received attention from scholars. Kingsley Widmer sees "The Primrose Path" as one of Lawrence's "parables of annihilation,"<sup>6</sup> but does not explore emigration. Nor does Widmer explore the emigration themes in "Samson and Delilah," and "Hadrian" (earlier published as "You Touched Me"). Later scholars, while pointing to a range of important concerns in these tales, have also overlooked migration. Con Coroneos and Trudi Tate, for example, note that the tales collected in *England My England* are set in the Midlands, are naturalistic, and exhibit "the now familiar attractions and repulsions between men and women, and the customary sexual panics."<sup>7</sup> Michael Bell observes that the tales "are a thematic whole," partly due to their "running concern with the nature of language as a truthful means of emotional expression."<sup>8</sup> I suggest that emigration is a further thematic link in the tales I have mentioned. Bell also notes that "the combined fear and need of intimacy forms the dramatic core of all the stories,"<sup>9</sup> and emigration may be seen as one of the means by which some of the characters avoid intimacy.

### *The Lost Girl – Dark, Regenerative Promise in Australia*

Lawrence wrote *The Lost Girl* between early March and early May 1920 (LG, xxviii), although the novel has origins in a number of much earlier manuscripts. *The Lost Girl* reflects Lawrence's state of mind after his traumatic experience of wartime England and subsequent flight to Europe. He still harboured the vestiges of his dream of Rananim and

<sup>6</sup> Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), see pp. 25-26.

<sup>7</sup> Con Coroneos and Trudi Tate, "Lawrence's Tales," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough p. 108.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, "Introduction," *England, My England and Other Stories*, p. xv.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. xxix.

he was drawn to the earthy, non-industrial way of life he found in rural Italy. The novel presents a moribund England which is contrasted with a more “living” foreignness, exemplified by the exoticism of the Natcha-Kee-Tawara troupe, and non-English characters such as Dr Alexander Graham and Ciccio.

Dr Alexander Graham, introduced in chapter two, is Lawrence’s first Australian character. It is through Graham that we come to understand that Lawrence had, by 1920, developed a vision of Australia which was positive and potentially regenerative. Australia appears in all of Lawrence’s five subsequent novels. We may characterise *The Lost Girl*, therefore, as marking the beginning of this “Australian period” in Lawrence’s *oeuvre*. It also marks a change in Lawrence’s fictional representation of Australia – from the convenience of disappearance in the Australian “bush” found in *The White Peacock*, and the difficulties he saw with the crude motives for migration in “The Primrose Path.” Alvina Houghton, the novel’s protagonist, ponders the prospect of being the wife of Dr Graham, and living in Sydney. Lawrence wrote that “Alvina, in whom the questing soul is lodged, moves towards reunion with the dark half of humanity” (iii. 521). She is a seeker, whose engagement to Dr Graham, and consideration of a life in Australia, anticipates the subsequent journeys to Australia of Somers in *Kangaroo* and Jack Grant in *The Boy in the Bush*. Her search for the “dark half of humanity” embodies, variously, racial, geographic and sexual alternatives to mainstream British provincial life. Dr Graham is “dark in colouring” (LG, 22:18), suggesting dark Aboriginality, and displays a sensuality which is oppositional to that of the English midlands male. Lawrence later evokes the idea of a dark Australia more fully with “the dark God” in *Kangaroo* (K, 154:33), and “the Lord of Death” from whom Jack is “dark anointed” in *The Boy in the Bush* (BB, 292:8). *The Lost Girl*, therefore, in presenting a positive Australia, sees Australia as oppositional to provincial English society, as “other.” John Worthen, in his single volume biography links *The Lost Girl* with two other Lawrence novels of this period – the unfinished *Aaron’s Rod* and *Mr Noon*, observing that “the three novels comprise a kind of comic, fragmentary trilogy of disillusionment with English society, with marriage, and with love.”<sup>10</sup> We may also add Australia as another unifying element within these novels. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in drawing attention to Lawrence’s marriage difficulties which had surfaced by the end of the war, observes that “his marriage was not what it had been” (TE, 577). Lawrence

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<sup>10</sup> Worthen, D. H. *Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, p. 231.

wrote of *The Lost Girl*: “I’m doing Mixed Marriage – it should be more popular” than either *Women in Love* or *The Rainbow* (iii. 485). In imagining Alvina’s “interracial” marriage with a dark Australian, and in presenting her union with Ciccio, Lawrence may also have been exploring an alternative to his own troubled intra racial marriage.

*The Lost Girl* earned Lawrence “the 1921 James Tait Black Memorial Prize, at that time probably the most prestigious prize for British fiction” (TE, 700). The novel is, however, generally seen as one of Lawrence’s minor works. F. R. Leavis saw it as one of Lawrence’s “lesser novels,”<sup>11</sup> and most recently, John Worthen sees *The Lost Girl* as “less demanding on its readers than *The Rainbow* or *Women in Love*.”<sup>12</sup> Criticism has overlooked the Australian element in *The Lost Girl*, tending to focus on Alvina’s more overarching rejection of English midlands life, her rebellious escape from that life represented by her joining the exotic acting troupe, the Natcha-Kee-Tawaras, and the promise of America, which appears at the conclusion of the novel. Carol Siegel, for example, sees Alvina’s rebellion as beginning when she “first outrages her family with her decision to become a maternity nurse”<sup>13</sup> – something improper for a woman of her middle, merchant class. Importantly, however, Alvina is galvanised into this action by an earlier outrage, her anguished consideration and later rejection of the Australian Dr Graham’s offer of marriage:

‘Do you wish you had gone to Australia?’ put in Miss Pinnegar.

‘No, I don’t wish I had gone to Australia,’ retorted Alvina with a rude laugh. ‘Australia isn’t the only other place besides Woodhouse.

Miss Pinnegar was naturally offended. But the curious insolence which sometimes came out in the girl was inherited direct from her father.

‘You see dear,’ said Miss Frost, agitated: ‘if you knew what you wanted, it would be easier to see the way.’

‘I want to be a nurse,’ rapped out Alvina. (LG, 28:20-29)

<sup>11</sup> F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: Life of an Outsider*, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> Siegel, *Lawrence Among the Women*, p. xviii.

Alvina's rebellious desire to be a nurse arises directly from her brief but intense relationship with Dr Graham:

She had never thought of being a nurse—the idea had never entered her head. If it had she would certainly never have entertained it. But she had heard Alexander speak of Nurse This and Sister That. And so she had rapped out her declaration. (*LG*, 28:34-35, 29:1-3)

In this scene, the novel associates the Australian doctor with the beginning of Alvina's vigorous and disruptive search for selfhood and independence which eventuates in her moving to London to undertake training as a maternity nurse (*LG*, 29:37-39). It is Dr Graham who provides Alvina with her first sense that she might pursue a life outside her provincial town.

Alvina meets Graham at “the age of twenty-three, when it looked as if she were destined to join the ranks of the old maids” (*LG*, 21:38-39), like the Misses Pinnegar (who manages the household) and Frost (Alvina's governess). Alvina has a “certain pure breeding and inherent culture” which marks her out from her community (*LG*, 22:2), and Miss Frost “with anxious foreseeing” has induced Alvina to prepare for her future by giving piano lessons (*LG*, 22:7). It is against this background of confinement and careful grooming that Alvina meets Dr Graham “an Australian who had been in Edinburgh taking his medical degree” and who is assisting the Houghton's family doctor (*LG*, 22:11-12). Mrs Houghton is an invalid, and it is after Dr Graham visits her that we are introduced more fully to him, through the negative gaze of the Houghton household:

Alexander Graham called to see Mrs Houghton. Mrs Houghton did not like him. She said he was creepy. He was man of medium height, dark in colouring, with very dark eyes, and a body which seemed to move inside his clothing. He was amiable and polite, laughed often, showing his teeth. It was his teeth which Miss Frost could not stand. She seemed to see a strong mouthful of cruel, compact teeth. She declared he had dark blood in his veins, that he was not a man to be trusted, and that never, never would he make any woman's life happy. (*LG*, 22:16-23)

Both Mrs Houghton and Miss Frost reject Graham as a foreigner, as an outsider. Miss Frost's speculation at his "dark blood," strongly suggests that Graham may have Australian Aboriginal forebears, profoundly alien in provincial England. The way his body moves and the prominence of his teeth give Graham a naked, animal quality which is potent and threatening. Miss Frost smells danger for Alvina. Alvina, however, is drawn to Graham, who stirs in her the first tremors of romantic passion, and it is this transgressive attraction, culminating in her engagement, which constitutes Alvina's first act of rebellion against her provincial background:

As they passed under the lamps he saw her face lifted, the eyes shining, the delicate nostrils dilated, as of one who scents battle and laughs to herself. She seemed to laugh with a certain proud, sinister recklessness. His hands trembled with desire.  
So they were engaged. He bought her a ring, an emerald set in tiny diamonds. (*LG*, 23:4-9)

For a time the household struggles with Alvina's intended marriage: "Miss Frost looked grave and silent, but would not openly deny her approval" (*LG*, 23:9-10). Alvina's parents are severely challenged: "Her father treated the young man with suave attention, punctuated by fits of jerky hostility and jealousy. Her mother merely sighed, and took Sal Volatile" (*LG*, 23:14-17). The racial suspicion felt by the Houghton household is shared by the townsfolk: "The darkie as people called him" (*LG*, 23:26-27). Alvina's feelings for Dr Graham are also tied to her sense of his racial difference, which is at once attractive and repugnant:

To tell the truth, Alvina herself was a little repelled by the man's love-making. She found him fascinating, but a trifle repulsive. And she was not sure whether she hated the repulsive element, or whether she rather gloried in it. She kept her look of arch, half-derisive recklessness, which was so unbearably painful to Miss Frost, and so exciting to the dark little man. It was a strange look in a refined, really virgin girl—oddly sinister. And her voice had a curious bronze-like resonance that acted straight on

the nerves of her hearers: unpleasantly on most English nerves, but like fire on the different susceptibilities of the young man[...]. (*LG*, 23:18-26)

Alvina's "half-derisive recklessness" propels her towards Graham, who not being English, has "different susceptibilities," which it is implied are inflamed in a way an Englishman's are not. Alvina and Dr Graham speak to the savage in each other. It is the aptly named Miss Frost who dampens the fire of the lovers by refusing to allow a marriage prior to Alexander's sailing for Sydney: "He must see his people first" (*LG*, 23:30). And then, having earlier strongly hinted at her fear of his "dark blood," rather than opposing the union on racial grounds, Miss Frost tries another tack – love. Miss Frost recognises that physical passion is the basis of Alvina's feelings towards Alexander and after he leaves England challenges Alvina to declare that she is also in love with him:

So the time passed, and he sailed. Alvina missed him, missed the extreme excitement of him rather than the human being he was. Miss Frost set to work to regain her influence over her ward, to remove the arch, reckless, almost lewd look from the girl's face. It was a question of heart against sensuality. Miss Frost tried and tried to wake again the girl's loving heart—which loving heart was certainly not occupied by *that man*. It was a hard task, an anxious, bitter task Miss Frost had set herself.

But at last she succeeded. Alvina seemed to thaw.

[...]'Do you love him, dear?' said Miss Frost with emphasis, knitting her thick, passionate, earnest eyebrows. 'Do you love him sufficiently? *That's* the point.'

'I don't really know, she said hurriedly. I don't really.' (*LG*, 23:32-40, 24:9-17)

Miss Frost, in asserting the "heart against sensuality," establishes a dichotomy which Lawrence utterly rejected. Miss Frost is one of "the old maids" because she has denied her sensual nature (*LG*, 21:39). In an essay "Love," Lawrence explained his belief that love, to be complete, was necessarily the union of the spirit *and* the senses:

But the love between a man and a woman, when it is whole, is dual. It is the melting pot into pure communion, and it is the friction of sheer sensuality, both. In pure communion I become whole in love. And in pure, fierce passion of sensuality I am burned into essentiality. (*P*, 154)

Although Alvina admits to Miss Frost that she doesn't "really know" if she loves Dr Graham in her heart, she is painfully aware of his sensual attraction and thrilled by the power of his physicality:

And then, most irritating, a complete *volte face* in her feelings. The clear-as-daylight mood disappeared as daylight is bound to disappear. She found herself in a night where the little man loomed large, potent, and magical, while Miss Frost had dwindled to nothingness. At such times she wished with all her force that she could travel like a cablegram to Australia. She felt it was the only way. She felt the dark, passionate receptivity of Alexander overwhelmed her, enveloped her even from the Antipodes. She felt herself going distracted—she felt she was going out of her mind. For she could not act. (*LG*, 24:28-37)

The memory of Dr Graham's physical attraction counteracts the negating influence of Miss Frost and the English midlands society she represents. He is so potent that she can feel his influence from the remote "Antipodes," his dark physicality is as oppositional as the geographic location of Australia. In the Houghton household, Dr Graham's Australian otherness overrides his being a doctor, which would normally make him a good catch for the middle class but penniless Alvina.

Miss Frost, it transpires, is painfully aware that she is a victim of her own denial of physical passion. As the weeks go by Miss Frost begins to crack, to doubt her resolve: "Don't notice what I have said. Act for yourself dear," she urges Alvina (*LG*, 26:1-2). For Miss Frost, Alvina's romance has been like a lens directed at her own life – her most vital years have passed. Rather than acting with cruel and youthful triumph, Alvina registers Miss Frost's self-realisation with compassion, and with a heightened sense of the significance of the opportunity afforded to her by Graham:

The terrible poignancy of the woman of fifty two, who now at last had broken down, silenced the girl of twenty three, and roused all her passionate tenderness. The terrible sound of “never now, never now—it is too late,” which seemed to ring in the curious, indrawn cries of the elder woman, filled the girl with a deep wisdom. (*LG*, 26:15-20)

Alvina cannot bear to follow the wizened life of Miss Frost. In stark contrast, Alvina revels in her memory of the carnality of her relationship with Dr Graham. He remains alive, and vital, long after he has sailed home to Australia:

Alvina had kept a little photograph of the man. She would often go and look at it. Love?—no, it was not love! It was something more primitive still. It was curiosity, deep, radical, burning curiosity. How she looked and looked at his dark, impertinent-seeming face. A flicker of derision came into her eyes. Yet still she looked.

In the same manner she would look into the faces of the young men of Woodhouse. But she never found what she found in her photograph.

They all seemed like blank sheets of paper in comparison. (*LG*, 27:5-12)

The dark featured “primitive” Dr Graham stands out amongst the civilised but insipid English provincial men who surround her (*LG*, 27:7).

Ultimately, however, Alvina is sufficiently her father’s daughter at this stage, and the product of the careful governance of Miss Frost to also see Alexander as “a terrible outsider, and inferior” (*LG*, 24:22). The “flicker of derision” she feels towards his photograph heralds her eventual rejection of him. Miss Frost, it seems to Alvina, was at least partly right after all. Alvina’s heart has not gone over fully to Dr Graham. She holds herself back:

The bright, arch look was still on her face. But her heart was sore. She wanted to cry, and fling herself on the breast of her darling. But she couldn’t. No, for her life she couldn’t. Some little devil sat in her breast and kept her smiling archly. (*LG*, 29: 25-28)



For Lawrence's purposes in the novel Alvina could not have married Dr Graham – unless he had needed simply to dispose of the characters in Australia in the Dickens and Hardy sense. And Lawrence might have had difficulty depicting a convincing life for her in an Australia which was still unknown to him. Dr Graham, nevertheless, is an opportunity manqué. Importantly, his awakening of the regenerative, passionate world of the senses in Alvina, denied by her social class in England, suggests that in Australia her yearnings might be realised.

Alvina's consideration of a life in Australia also prepares her for her subsequent even more outrageous joining of the Natcha-Kee-Tawara troupe and her falling in love with the Italian, Ciccio. Her relationship with Ciccio continues her emotional journey which began with Graham. When Alvina first studies Ciccio at close quarters she sees a dark, sensual potency, similar to Graham's:

The head and the hands dropped inert. The long black lashes lay motionless, the rather long, fine Greek nose drew the same light breaths, the mouth remained shut. Strange fine black hair, he had, close as fur, animal, and naked, frail-seeming, tawny hands. (*LG*, 129:25-29)

We should not, therefore, see her attraction to Dr Graham as simply one of "her first fruitless rebellions" (*TE*, 574). Her first relationship catapults her, not only into nursing, and financial independence, but also into her relationship with Ciccio. Importantly, through Alvina's attraction to both Graham and Ciccio Lawrence confronts head-on one of the major anxieties of his time, namely the fear of miscegenation. It is this fear which lies at the heart of the suspicion with which Alvina's midlands community view her two suitors. Against this suspicion, the novel asserts that the sensual non-English races exemplified by Graham and Ciccio represent a counter to the mentalised and intellectualised flavour of modern industrial society – a recurring theme in Lawrence's work.

The novel also formally links the Australian, Alexander Graham with her decision to commit to Ciccio. Graham is not killed-off with his return to Sydney. When Alvina flees from Lancaster, to escape her interim, ill-considered betrothal to Dr Mitchell, and to consider what Ciccio's reappearance in her life means to her, she resolves "to go to London and find work in the war-hospitals" (*LG*, 285:2-3), where she has a important revelation which changes the course of her life:

But in the night she dreamed that Alexander, her first fiancé, was with her on the quay of some harbour, and was reproaching her bitterly, even reviling her, for having come too late, so that they had missed their ship. They were there to catch the boat—and she, for dilatoriness, was an hour late, and she could see the broad stern of the steamer not too far off. Just an hour late. She showed Alexander her watch—exactly ten o’clock, instead of nine. And he was more angry than ever, because her watch was slow. He pointed to the harbour clock – it was ten minutes past ten. When she woke up she was thinking of Alexander. It was such a long time since she had thought of him. She wondered if he had a right to be angry with her. (*LG*, 285:4-15)

The dream is a warning to her that she has lost one opportunity to enter into a vital and passionate marriage and that she is in danger of doing so again. Consequently, Alvina resolves not to marry Dr Mitchell and that “she would wire to Ciccio and meet him” (*LG*, 285:24-25). Alvina’s union with Ciccio is, therefore, the culmination of her earlier sensual awakening by Alexander Graham.

At the time Lawrence was writing *The Lost Girl*, he maintained his regenerative vision of Rananim. In late January 1920 he informed Lady Cynthia Asquith that “we think, of course, of the South Seas or Africa” (*iii*. 462). By March 1920 Lawrence had written 30,000 words of *The Lost Girl*, which would have included the major Australian element (*LG*, xi). The novel was published in November, and the appearance of Dr Alexander Graham demonstrates that by 1920 Australia was also one of many places which Lawrence looked to as an alternative to England and a possible Rananim.<sup>14</sup> We may conclude that, just as Alvina’s eventual flight from Woodhouse to Italy to be with Ciccio, is in part, Lawrence’s, her speculation about Australia early in the novel is also partly his. By August 1921, Lawrence was articulating nervousness at his long cherished desire to go to America (*iv*. 73), and the regenerative view of Australia in *The Lost Girl* suggests that curiosity about Australia was beginning to supplant his earlier hopes for America.

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<sup>14</sup> In early 1913 Lawrence wrote over one hundred pages of “The Insurrection of Miss Houghton,” an early version of *The Lost Girl*, now lost (*LG*, xxii – xxiii). It is not possible to discern, therefore, whether Lawrence included references to Australia or an Australian character in “The Insurrection.”

*Aaron's Rod: A Robust Australian*

Lawrence began *Aaron's Rod* in late 1917, but he later abandoned it, and it was not until July 1920 that he re-commenced work (*AR*, xvii, xxi). He completed it by the end of May 1921 (*TE*, 738). Lawrence arrived in Italy in November 1919 and the second, Italian section of the novel, reflects in part his own experiences. Lawrence met the South African Jan Juta, the likely inspiration for the Australian, Francis Dekker (*AR*, 322), in the Spring of 1920, at Taormina, while still writing *The Lost Girl* (*TE*, 578). While he may have transposed Juta's nationality from South African to Australian to deflect attention from the person of his inspiration, Lawrence's choice of country demonstrates his continuing interest in the Australian thread he had worked into the fabric of *The Lost Girl*. Aaron Sisson, the protagonist in *Aaron's Rod*, first becomes aware of Dekker and his companion after witnessing a street demonstration by socialists:

Aaron looked round, dazed. And then for the first time he noticed, on the next balcony to his own, two young men: young gentlemen, he would have said. The one was tall and handsome and well-coloured, might be Italian. But the other, with his pale thin face and his rimless monocle in his eye, he was surely an Englishman. He was surely one of the young officers shattered by the war. (*AR*, 186:35-40)

Strikingly, the Englishman is "shattered by the war" while his companion, who had only worked in "the War Office" (*AR*, 194:4), and whom we later learn is the Australian, Dekker, is a healthy young man, unscathed. Dekker, like Alexander Graham in *The Lost Girl*, is "well-coloured," presumably darkish coloured – he "might be Italian." Sisson hears the two men talking in English and when he returns in the evening he sees "the two young Englishmen seated at a table" (*AR*, 187:28-29). Dekker, therefore, although Australian, and darkly other like Graham, is also an "Englishman," and Lawrence's conflation of nationalities reflects both the legal situation of the time, and the assumptions and aspirations of many Australians. In *Kangaroo*, we also find the residents of Sydney described as "British Australians" (*K*, 21:2). Dekker becomes aware of Sisson and is excited by the presence of a third "Englishman" and suggests to his companion Angus that

they invite Aaron to join them. Angus replies dryly that in Italy “the English are all over the place wherever you go, like bits of orange peel in the street” (*AR*, 189:24-25). We already know that Dekker’s physical appearance differs from Angus’s, and that he has experienced the war at a desk. He is further differentiated from Angus and Sisson by his contrasting social origins:

Francis was the son of a highly-esteemed barrister and politician of Sydney, and in his day would inherit his father’s lately won baronetcy. But Francis had not very much money: and was much more class-flexible than Angus. Angus had been born in a house with a park, and of awful hard-willed, money-bound people. Francis came of a much more adventurous, loose excitable family, he had the colonial newness and adaptability. He knew, for his own part, that class superiority was just a trick, nowadays. Still, it was a trick that paid. And a trick he was going to play as long as it did pay. (*AR*, 197:27-35)

Dekker, as a colonial, the narrator implies, is free of old world constraints and conventions, and wears the prospect of an aristocratic title lightly. At the same time he is energetic and open to opportunity. He is robust in health, whereas the monocled Angus is “very ill” and his cheeks are “withered” (*AR*, 187:32-36), a progenitor of the crippled Clifford Chatterley, who is also damaged by the war. Francis Dekker is “class-flexible,” knows that “class superiority” is “just a trick.” He attracts the attention of those around him in a railway carriage: “It was Francis, long and elegant, with his straight shoulders and his coat buttoned to show his waste, and his face so well-formed and so modern. So modern, altogether” (*AR*, 198:4-6). His modernness, the novel suggests, stems from his “colonial newness.” In the railway carriage scene where Aaron loses his booked seat to a jeering Italian, it is Dekker’s sense of fair play which is outraged, rather than his feeling that class boundaries have been violated. It is the Italian who asserts traditional class boundaries as justification for his action: “There was room for such snobs in the first class,” the man utters (*AR*, 202:23). Angus sizes up the situation and asserts the wealth of his class through his offer to “pay the difference” in the fare (*AR*, 202:35-36). Dekker is “almost beside himself” in the face of the immovability of European class structures “and quite powerless” (*AR*, 203:2). While being heavily Anglicised, he remains Australian, freer, his

aristocratic lineage enlivened by his “colonial newness and adaptability” (*AR*: 197:33). The presence of Dekker, the colonial, Australian-born modern aristocrat, indicates that Lawrence believed that a new and positive type of Englishman had developed in Australia. Later, in *St. Mawr*, through Rico and the Manbys, Lawrence was to ruthlessly denounce this same type as a dilettante, and a threat to the integrity of British society.

*Mr Noon: the Wilds of Australia*

In *Mr Noon*, we find a brief reference to Australia at the beginning of chapter xxi. Terry has just joined Gilbert and Johanna on their journey across the Alps from Germany into Italy. He is a romantic, “impulsive and charming” yet also “in touch with the most advanced literature” (*MN*, 255:8-9). In the presence of Terry, the remote mountain terrain takes on an edenic quality, and the travellers enter into a primal relation with the landscape:

He was a great camper-out. If they had been in the wilds of Australia it could not have been more thorough. Down they clambered to black depths between the cliffs—they got on a bushy island in mid-stream – they roasted pieces of veal on sticks before a fire, far away down there in the gloom. Then Terry flung himself into a water-fall pool. (*MN*, 255:16-21)

Terry evokes in civilised Europe, a wildness normally associated with the (apparently) quintessential “wilds of Australia.” This is a return to the remote bush Lawrence referred to in *The White Peacock*, but the roasting of meat and the edenic “waterfall pool” invest Australia with a more positive and Arcadian landscape, inhabited by noble savages rather than the detritus of England. Gilbert has been unreceptive to the positive element in the landscape of their tour. He has been preoccupied with the impact of Johanna’s leaving her husband. The landscape has, hitherto, been a wilderness of tortured souls rather than a place of celebration. In a mountain chapel, Gilbert is disturbed by the depiction of “poor Anna Eichberg, with her son in prison” (*MN*, 242:34), and “terrible crucifixes” (*MN*, 249: 13). Wild Australia, and its association with the natural world, appears, by contrast, to be free of such old world symbols of suffering.

There were, of course, other wild places in Lawrence’s mind at this time, namely his various speculations about where to locate Rananim, including in America. Lawrence

had recently “visited” the American west in his essays which were to become *Studies of Classic American Literature*, but although *Mr Noon* is set prior to World War I, and before his attention had turned to America, the novel reflects Lawrence’s growing ambivalence towards America in the early 1920s. The bulk of it he wrote between November 1920 and February 1921,<sup>15</sup> after he had explored Australia more fully in *The Lost Girl* and while he still worked on *Aaron’s Rod*. On 30 September 1920 Lawrence told his American agent, Robert Mountsier of his hopes of settling on a Mrs Thrasher’s farm in Connecticut (*iii*. 600 n. 3, 605). He would be able to write for his American audience (*iii*. 664). On 15 March 1921, however, disappointed, he informed Mountsier that “circumstances” made this impossible (*iii*. 684). These centred on Frieda’s desire that he visit her sick mother in Germany (*iii*. 678 in *TE*, 636-7). Significantly, however, on 25 March he wrote to Mountsier: “I don’t really think I want a farm” and: “I don’t think I want to come to the United States” (*iii*. 693). This sudden change of heart reveals Lawrence’s deep concerns about America at this time, and throws into sharper relief, the brief but positive reference to Australia in *Mr Noon*. Johanna and Everard are English and their new life in America has foundered. After their affair begins, Gilbert counsels Johanna: “I shouldn’t go back to America” (*MN*, 131:35). While *Mr Noon* is not *about* Australia or America, it is instructive to note that the novel’s brief references to both countries reveal a continuing tilt in Lawrence’s hopes, away from America and towards Australia. In *Mr Noon*, a wild Australia is untainted by the social and political problems of both Europe and America.

It is also useful to consider the fact of Lawrence not completing *Mr Noon*. This may be explained partly by the amount of other work occupying Lawrence between 1920 and early 1922. Lawrence completed *The Lost Girl* in May 1920 and *Aaron’s Rod* in May 1921.<sup>16</sup> Peter Preston notes that Gilbert’s and Johanna’s relationship has more in common with attitudes in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, than those espoused in the novels of the early 1920s - *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron’s Rod*, and the later *Kangaroo*.<sup>17</sup> Preston also observes that for Lawrence, “writing retrospectively had its difficulties for the kind of novelist Lawrence had become by 1921.”<sup>18</sup> Soon afterwards, however, in mid-1922, we find Lawrence writing “retrospectively” in *Kangaroo*, in “The Nightmare,” in which he recalls

<sup>15</sup> Peter Preston, “Introduction,” *Mr Noon*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Lindeth Vasey (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>16</sup> Preston, “Introduction,” *Mr Noon*, pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

his wartime experiences in Cornwall. This points to an autobiographical and chronological link between the two novels. In October 1922, having written the bulk of *Kangaroo*, Lawrence compiled a stock-take of his current work-in-progress. He told Robert Mountsier, his American publisher: "I doubt if I want to finish *Mr Noon*. One day I might (iv. 319). Lawrence never did, but by this time he had written "The Nightmare." This distinctive and retrospective chapter of *Kangaroo*, which for some critics sits rather uncomfortably in that novel, and which Mountsier suggested should be published separately (iv. 320), may be seen partly as a continuation of *Mr Noon*, as well as an integral part of *Kangaroo*. Both novels are heavily autobiographical, and the "The Nightmare" sits chronologically after *Mr Noon*, leaping, as it were, over the marriage of Gilbert and Johanna," and catapulting them, as Richard and Harriett Somers in *Kangaroo*, into World War I. While this does not make the unfinished *Mr Noon* any more "Australian," or "The Nightmare" any less so, it suggests that, Lawrence was, in a sense, continuing to write the autobiographical elements of *Mr Noon* into his Australian novel. Hence his unwillingness to finish *Mr Noon* – it was completed in *Kangaroo*. *Mr Noon* and "The Nightmare" may be seen, therefore, as further examples of what Paul Eggert, writing of *The Boy in the Bush*, sees as Lawrence's "provisionality."<sup>19</sup> Eggert also notes Lawrence's tendency to re-write or return to completed [or uncompleted] material, and the presence of continuities in themes in his works, which are obscured by the conventions of titling and publishing.<sup>20</sup> *Mr Noon* and "The Nightmare" are illustrations of this practice.

The examination of Lawrence's pre-Australian texts in this chapter charts the evolution of his strengthening interest in the regenerative potential of Australia prior to his visit in 1922. His introduction of a well-developed Australian character in *The Lost Girl* indicates that Lawrence's "Australian period" may be dated from early 1920, rather than the commencement of *Kangaroo* in 1922. The strong Australian presence in his later novella, *St. Mawr*, demonstrates the full extent of this period, which covers his long fiction written between 1920 and 1925. The Australian characters in *The Lost Girl* and *Aaron's Rod* also demonstrate the importance of looking beyond Lawrence's wholly Australian novels, *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*, if we are to fully grasp Lawrence's conflicting visions of Australia, as well as his decision to delay his visit to America. And Lawrence's

<sup>19</sup> Paul Eggert, "Introduction," *The Boy in the Bush*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Paul Eggert (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p. xxx.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Eggert, "The Biographical Issue," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough, pp. 171-172.

positive evocations of Australia in *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod* and *Mr Noon* anticipate a central theme in *Kangaroo*, that of emigration to Australia.



## 5. MIGRANTS AND MISFITS IN *KANGAROO*: MR AND MRS SOMERS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

In chapter 3 I examined some contexts for Lawrence's decision to travel to Australia, and the convergence between his general understanding of Australia as a destination for British migrants, and his desire to seek regeneration in a utopian environment far from Europe. In chapter 4 I showed how these impulses are reflected in the three novels he wrote prior to his visit to Australia – *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod* and *Mr. Noon*. In this chapter I will examine *Kangaroo* in light of its themes of migration to, and settlement in, Australia. Richard and Harriett Somers are not simply travellers in Australia – they are, as Lawrence and Frieda were, potential migrants. The Somerses' "experience" of Australia the nation and erstwhile collection of British colonies (as distinct from its physical landscape) is framed in a wider critique about British settlement in Australia, and the transplanted British culture. *Kangaroo*, therefore, challenges not only Lawrence's preconceptions and expectations about Australia but also the contemporary discourse on British migration to Australia, in which Australia was idealised as a destination for British migrants, and where Australian chauvinistic assertions of a narrow nationalism often masked deeper insecurities. There is in *Kangaroo*, a stark contrast with the positive, regenerative visions of Australia which are found in the three novels which precede it. In *Kangaroo* Lawrence revisits the negative themes found in his early tale, "The Primrose Path," and Australian society re-emerges as materialistic, mechanised and spiritually impoverished. *Kangaroo* depicts the clash between his own idealistic conceptions of Australia, and the country he found in the 1920s. In challenging assumptions about the efficacy of British migration to Australia, prevalent at both the metropolitan centre of empire and the periphery, Lawrence also explores the nature of Australian nationality, the hazy and confused divide between British and Australian identity, and the alarming possibility that his own nationality might be fluid. He also explores the more universal difficulties experienced by migrants in establishing relationships in a new country.

*Kangaroo as Autobiography*

*Kangaroo* is regarded as an intensely autobiographical novel. It is set in “the present” of 1922, when Lawrence visited Australia. Bruce Steele describes *Kangaroo* as “in many respects thinly veiled autobiography” (*K*, xxiii). Macdonald Daly notes the centrality of the autobiographical aspects of *Kangaroo*, and how the novel “synthesises (or clashes)...fiction and autobiography.”<sup>1</sup> He notes the difficulty in separating Lawrence and the protagonist, Richard Somers, and asks whether Lawrence is not only the creator of the novel but also “its inhabitant?”<sup>2</sup> The answer to the latter is, I suggest, “yes”. There are, of course, inherent dangers in according veracity to everything one finds in such a novel. There can be a temptation to read all aspects of a novel back in to the life of its author as “evidence.” It is, therefore, important to read autobiographical novels with particular care if one wishes to draw conclusions about the life of the author. This said, the circumstances of Richard Somers coming to Australia, and the account of his experiences, closely mirror Lawrence’s own, and many of Lawrence’s reactions to Australia recorded in his letters are shared by Somers. Somers, like Lawrence is “a writer of poems and essays. In Europe he had made up his mind that everything was done for, played out, finished, and he must go to a new country. The newest country: young Australia!” (*K*, 13:35-38). Lawrence wrote in a letter in January 1922, just before leaving Europe: “Here in Europe can come nothing new” (*iv*. 162). In another letter soon afterwards Lawrence expressed his desire for profound change, and that he “would like to change [his] skin like the serpent” (*iv*. 185). It is this same desire for fundamental change which motivates Somers who, like Lawrence, “had come to this new country, the youngest country on the globe, to start a new life and flutter with a new hope” (*K*, 19:19-20).

#### *Australian Attempts to Attract British Migrants*

Importantly, *Kangaroo*, as well as engaging British migration to Australia from a British perspective, also registers a complementary “pull” by Australia to attract British migrants. One of the core tensions of the novel is that between Somers, with his criticisms of Australia, and Jack Callcott’s attempts to draw him into his political project with the right-wing Ben Cooley, and induce them to stay. Somers is also wooed from the left, by Willie

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald Daly, “Introduction,” *Kangaroo*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Bruce Steele (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxii, xxiii.

Struthers who wants him to work on his socialist newspaper. These Australian characters are all motivated by what they see as deficiencies in Australians. The country is in need of new British blood. Given his negative attitude to post-war Britain and Europe, Somers is ripe for settlement in Australia. Yet the more he is wooed the more he is repelled. This tension is established early on through the relationship between the “English” Somerses and the “Australian” Callcotts. Jack Callcott is at first suspicious of Somers until, somewhat equivocally, Somers concedes during a conversation about global politics, that he wouldn’t mind if “the power of capital were, *broke*” (K, 46:3-4). Callcott, in what for Somers is an embarrassing display of Australian male sensibility, responds in a “broken voice:” “I knew[...]that we was mates” (K, 46:15-16). Callcott overlooks Somers’s coolness in the face of his offer of Australian mateship, and excuses his foreignness, confiding with an earnestness which alarms Somers: ““You’re a stranger here. You’re from the Old Country. You’re different from us. But you’re a man we want, and you’re a man we’ve got to keep”” (K, 56:34-36). Somers has already ironised the peculiar blend of insecurity and superiority he finds at the heart of Australia’s self-image. Soon after his arrival, Somers reports to Harriett: ““It’s God’s Own Country, as they always tell you”” (K, 10:25). Callcott, despite his enthusiastic entreaty that Somers stay, prefaces his invitation by making it clear that he “would rather trust a Sydney man, and he’s a special sort of wombat, than an Englishman” (K, 55:33-35). Australian deficiency is also felt by Victoria Callcott, wife of Jack, who feels socially inferior to the Somerses. Victoria is painfully deferential towards the English couple. When Harriett invites the Callcotts to “high tea” Victoria is “like a lamb with two tails”, she “felt it was almost ‘society’” (K, 34:34, 35:26). Thus the novel cleverly negotiates the fracture between Australians’ surface sense of superiority and their deeper sense of deficiency.

Towards the end of the novel, when the two couples have fallen out with each other, and it is clear that the Somerses will leave Australia, Jack Callcott’s aggressively nationalistic view of the Somerses is made clear. Having lost the chance of securing Richard Somers’s brains, Callcott turns cynically to Harriett’s reproductive potential:

‘And Mrs Somers is a woman all over. She is that. I’m very sorry for my own sake and Vicky’s sake she’s going. I’m sorry for Australia’s sake. A woman like that ought to stop in a new country like this and breed sons for us. That’s what we want.’ (K, 338:40-339:1-4)

Somers rebuts Callcott head on: "I suppose if she wanted to stop and breed sons, she would" (*K*, 339:5). Callcott retorts bitterly: "They'd have to be your sons, that's the trouble, old man. And how's she going to manage that if you give us the go-by?" (*K*, 339:7).

Harriett's age in the novel is not indicated. The "real" Harriett, however, Frieda, was by 1922, 43 years of age and, with three children behind her, an unlikely candidate for Australian efforts to boost population. Callcott's entreaty, however, reflects official Australian migration policy objectives of the time, particularly its natalism. A 1921 Australian immigration pamphlet makes this very clear:

Australia, spacious sunny home of the sturdy, hearty Digger, is renewing her invitation to the people of the old Land to come out and help her realise her proud future as the Britain of the southern seas. Especially is there warmth and cordiality in this invitation to the healthy, wholesome British domestic girl—the girl who in some capacity, can help in the home as a first step towards entering into a home of her own. For Australia, above everything, is a land of home-making, and for the rapid multiplication of homes she needs more and more of the right type of girl, and there are not enough of the native-born to go around.<sup>3</sup>

This pamphlet also alerts us to the enduring duality in Australia's identity at this time. Australia is "the Britain of the southern seas," and to be Australian is to be British as well. This assumption lay at the core of Australian nationhood. Richard White observes that in 1901, when the Australian colonies federated, "race and blood ran deeper than nationality."<sup>4</sup> Australia could claim to be "98 per cent British" and the imagery of the time "suggested the ambiguity of the Australian identity: a new status, a new independence, but only within the context of a continuing relationship with Britain."<sup>5</sup> Lawrence, with his assertion many years before his arrival, that "Australia is a new country[...]not a split from England" (*i.* 425), found himself terribly mistaken. Somers, therefore, finds Australia

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<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet reproduced in Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration*, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> White, *Inventing Australia*, p.111.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

derivative, despairing that in Sydney “it was all London without being London” merely “a substitute for the real thing” (K, 20:17, 19-20). For Somers, Australia does not project a distinct nationality. Rather he finds a weird hybrid people who simultaneously display a combination of superiority and sycophancy towards Britain. Somers despises “these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity” (K, 21:2-3). In rebutting the Callcotts, Somers is also rebutting Australia’s view of itself at both official and community levels as “God’s Own Country” and a necessarily desirable place for British people to want to live. Somers’s disappointment and anger are also Lawrence’s. Australia might be British, but it is a lesser Britishness – a corruption of the genuine article. In *Kangaroo* there are no positively rendered Australian characters, like Dr Graham in *The Lost Girl* or Francis Dekker in *Aaron’s Rod*. I will discuss degeneration in *Kangaroo* in chapter 6.

### *Poet in Exile and Pommy*

The nature of Somers’s work, his being a poet, is a major element in the novel’s resistance to British migration to Australia. The skills of a poet are not required in Australia. The novel establishes an acute separation between the artist and an Australian society characterised as working class. Somers “felt himself entitled to all kinds of emotions and sensations which an ordinary man would have repudiated (K, 14:4-5). Lawrence’s self-referential and ironic authorial voice drives the subsequent narration: “It is always a question, whether there is any sense in taking notice of a poet’s fine feelings. The poet himself has misgivings about them” (K, 15:12-13). Here Lawrence “inhabits” the novel in the way Macdonald Daly suggests.<sup>6</sup> It is through “a bunch of workmen” that Lawrence introduces the reader to Australia (K, 7:3), and he evokes the Australian working man’s democratic ethos to define the Australian character in *Kangaroo*. The narrator notes ironically, at the conclusion of the novel’s opening paragraph, that the workmen have “that air of owning the city which belongs to a good Australian” (K, 7:11-12). These workmen, which include Callcott, are emblematic of the sense of material opportunity which Australian governments had long sought to cultivate in the minds of prospective migrants. Richard White observes that the idea of “a working man’s paradise” was projected from around the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, despite the considerable evidence that

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<sup>6</sup> Daly, “Introduction,” *Kangaroo* p. xxiii.

this was not universally the case.<sup>7</sup> White notes that: “Colonial governments and employer groups sought to attract labour by painting a picture of a land of promise.”<sup>8</sup> For one specific sector of the Australian working class this appears to have been true, namely “white, skilled males in secure jobs.”<sup>9</sup>

The Australian landscape also challenges Somers’s powers as an artist. It is strange and other to his British eyes, possessing an “*invisible* beauty[...]beyond the range of white vision” (*K*, 77: 1-3). Thus, when Ben Cooley, the lawyer who leads a right-wing paramilitary organisation, tells Somers that “Australia is waiting for her Homer—or her Theocritus,” Somers replies: ““If I were not blind...I might have a shot at Australian Homeric”” (*K*, 109:10-16). Somers’s ironic “Homeric,” while evident to the reader, is lost on Cooley.

Somers, therefore, as a consequence of his overwhelming sense of displacement in Australia, remote from the heart of empire, early in the novel sees himself as a poet-in-exile, suffering in an alien environment like another classical forbear, Ovid:

He understood now that the Romans had preferred death to exile. He could sympathise now with Ovid on the Danube, hungering for Rome and blind to the land around him, blind to the savages. So Somers felt blind to Australia, and blind to the uncouth Australians. To him they were barbarians. (*K*, 20:37-40, 21:1)

Ovid wrote bitterly of his exile from Rome in Book 3 of *Tristia*: “If someone there remembers banished Ovid/And in the City my name without me/Lives, let him know I dwell among barbarians.”<sup>10</sup> In Book 1 of *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, letters from the Black Sea, Ovid laments that his “exile” is “not merely from Rome but civilisation/itself.”<sup>11</sup> Somers’s similar feeling of exile also introduces the other side of the migration coin – the sense of alienation and loss. Lawrence wrote: “I feel if I lived in Australia for ever I should never open my mouth once to say one word that meant anything” (*iv*. 264). A new life in

<sup>7</sup> White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> A. D. Melville, Trans., E. J. Kenney, “Introduction,” *Ovid, Sorrows of an Exile: Tristia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.59.

<sup>11</sup> David R. Slavitt, Trans., *Ovid's Poetry in Exile* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 121.

Australia might have material benefits, but for a poet it is a living death. Somers, the poet, former citizen of England, then Europe, and who has rejected both, now feels cruel banishment in Australia, rather than opportunity. Ovid is a heroic poet for Lawrence and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is an important referent in *Kangaroo*. Like Ovid,<sup>12</sup> Lawrence named his first volume of poems *Amores*. Ovid suffered exile because of the contentiously lewd nature of his poetry,<sup>13</sup> and Lawrence suffered over the censorship of *The Rainbow*, and went into self-imposed exile as soon as he could after the war. There is a stylistic link between the two authors exemplified by authorial interventions. In *Kangaroo* Lawrence addresses the reader directly: "I hope, dear reader, you like plenty of conversation in a novel: it makes it so much lighter and brisker" (K, 282:9-11). E. J. Kenney observes that in *Metamorphoses*, "the reader is continuously aware of the poet."<sup>14</sup> Callcott working in his "motor-works place" (K, 24:18), in addition to being a barbarian on the fringe of empire, may be seen as representing Ovid's third age of man in *Metamorphoses*, the "race of iron/...Of baser vein all evil."<sup>15</sup> In *Kangaroo*, the narrator sees the polarities in contemporary politics as an Ovidian contest "between the rocky Scylla of the fixed, established ideal, and the whirling Charybdis of the conservative opposition to this ideal" (K, 297:32-34). In *Metamorphoses*, these twin hazards are successfully negotiated: "Past Scylla's reef and ravening Charybdis/The Trojan galleons had won their way."<sup>16</sup> In *Kangaroo*, however, Lawrence (characteristically) reworks the myth, producing a stalemate, where "humanity will never get through the straights" (K, 297:37). Lawrence, through his aligning of Somers's (and his own) sojourn in Australia with Ovid's exile elevates his own travels into a classical epic.

Despite his attempts at social intercourse in Australia, Somers believes, fundamentally, in his inherent social isolation. "No sort of people is my sort," he laments, "I write, but I write alone" (K, 65:16, 69:32). The working class, and Ovidian savage, Callcott, represents the antithesis of Somers's artistic sensibility. Callcott has a stolid intelligence leavened with cunning, and a democratic belief that he can speak on equal terms to Somers. Callcott probes Somers's motives in coming to Australia. "What made you come here? – Thought you'd like to write about it?" Callcott asks provocatively. "I

<sup>12</sup> E. J. Kenney, "Introduction," *Metamorphoses*, by Ovid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. ix.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. x.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. xxvii.

<sup>15</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Trans. A. D. Melville, "Introduction," E. J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

thought I might like to live here—and write here,’” Somers replies (*K*, 30:36-38). Callcott continues the conversation:

‘Write about the bushrangers and the heroine lost in the bush and wandering into a camp of bullies?’ said Jack.

‘Maybe,’ said Somers.

‘Do you mind if I ask you what sort of things you do write?’ said Jack, with some delicacy.

‘Oh—poetry—essays—’

‘Essays about what?’

‘Oh—rubbish mostly—’ (*K*, 30: 39-40, 31:1-6)

Jack’s interrogation treads an uncertain line between insecure sarcasm and a desperate hope that he might learn something from the English visitor. His suggested literary topics illustrate both the poverty and cliché of his own imagination and, by extension, the paucity of material available to the artist in Australia. As the conversation proceeds Somers maintains his high-brow distance. Harriett intervenes and suggests that Callcott should have a copy of something, but Somers says “it will only bore” him (*K*, 31: 16). Callcott, not to be deterred remarks: “‘I might rise up to it[...if I bring my full mental weight to bear on it,’” but Somers laughs “at the contradiction in metaphor” (*K*, 31:17-19), asserting his English artistic superiority over the boorish Australian.

In a similar vein, Somers refuses to be drawn into the preoccupations of the Australian revolutionary zealots, the right-wing Cooley and the socialist Struthers. Again Somers quickly discerns that they are not genuinely interested in his essays or poetry, but seek to harness his writing skills to their own ends. Ben Cooley is a charming but pompous *bon vivant*: “Let’s talk of Peach Melba. —Where have you had the very best Peach Melba you ever tasted?” (*K*, 119:38-39), he proposes, soon after meeting Somers, when the conversation falters. Lawrence had heard Melba singing *La Bohème*, in 1911 (*i.* 281), and therefore knew the inspiration for the dessert. The novel here seems to be sending up Cooley’s reference as pretentious. Cooley has read Somers’s “series of articles on Democracy” (*K*, 110:20). In Lawrence’s “Democracy,” published just before he arrived in Australia, we find a parallel with Somers’s concerns about Cooley’s politics. In “Democracy,” as well as opposing democracy as a credo, Lawrence writes of his opposition



to other ideals, the “dead ideal” of “Nation” and “State” (*P*, 702). In *Kangaroo*, Cooley’s desire to shore up the state, to “keep *order*” through a sort of patriarchal tyranny, repels Somers. His “heart sank” (*K*, 111:37-38, 112:5). Somers also rejects Cooley’s collective “will-to-love” impulse towards humanity in general (*K*, 209:29). Somers explains that in place of Cooley’s dead ideals, they should instead “start as men, with the great gods beyond” (*K*, 210:15-16). One must realise one’s own individuality. In “Democracy” Lawrence looks forward to when “men become their own decent selves again” (*P*, 718). This will be achieved “spontaneously, not by previous ordering” (*P*, 718), by those such as Cooley. Somers runs into a similar problem with the idealism of the socialist Willie Struthers. Struthers is “a distinct Australian type, thin, hollow-cheeked” (*K*, 193: 22-23). Struthers’s racialised marks of national difference exacerbate the gulf in vision between the two men. Struthers, like Cooley, wants to harness Somers’s writing skills for his own purposes:

‘Now, Mr Somers, here’s your chance. I’m in a position to ask you, won’t you help us to bring out a sincere, *constructive* Socialist paper, not a grievance airer, but a paper that calls to the constructive spirit in men. [...] Then here is your work before you. Come and breathe the breath of life into us, through the printed word. [...] let it appeal to the Australian, to his heart.’ (*K*, 200:18-31)

Again we may recall Lawrence’s “Democracy” where “Democracy and Socialism are dead ideals” (*P*, 702). Somers is perhaps even more dismissive of politics. “I just don’t care about it,” he asserts (*K*, 203:8-9). Somers’s rejection of Cooley and Struthers means that he cannot easily earn a living in Australia as a writer. The working man’s Australia, is not conducive to Somers practising his art. In Australia Somers is, therefore, enraged and paralysed in his new environment:

He tried to write, that being his job. But usually, nowadays, when he tapped his unconscious, he found himself in a seethe of steady fury, general rage. [...] The off-hand, self-assertive working people of Australia made him feel diabolic. (*K*, 163:6-8, 12-13)

Unlike Somers, however, Lawrence found a “job” and worked incredibly hard and quickly at *Kangaroo* while living in Australia. Once the novel was largely completed, there was nothing further in Australia for him to do. “Having done my novel I am out of work until we sail,” he wrote (iv.280). While *Kangaroo* is an account of Lawrence’s own Homeric odyssey and Ovidian exile, paradoxically, it is also a novel written in Australia, about how one can’t live by writing in Australia!

Somers’s difficulties as a writer in Australia, and his oppositional attitude to Australians, comprise an important element of the novel’s argument against migration to Australia. The argument is further developed through the character William James (Jaz) Trehwella, a Cornish migrant. The name William James Trehwella, appears to be deeply symbolic, and strongly suggests an allusion to William James the American philosopher, brother of Henry the novelist. Lawrence read James’s *Pragmatism* in 1907,<sup>17</sup> and as John Worthen puts it in his discussion of the impact of William James on Lawrence: “Pragmatism was James’s way of attacking idealism” (*EY*, 180). Worthen does not discuss *Kangaroo*, but Jaz’s life credo in *Kangaroo* is utterly devoid of idealism, and he may be seen as an example of Jamesian pragmatism. Jaz serves as a conscience or alter ego for Somers, reminding Somers that he must see Australia as it is and not as he wants it to be. Jaz’s outlook is fiercely practical, materialistic and wholly self-serving. These attributes underpin his “success” as a migrant in Australia. Jaz “had been in Australia since he was a boy of fifteen—he had come with his brother” (*K*, 30:5-7). Jaz married his brother’s widow and inherited his brother’s child and house (*K*, 29:25-29), and has landed very squarely on his feet. Jaz recounts the grinding poverty of his childhood as “a half starved youngster” in Cornwall, his “sixpence a week” (*K*, 60:38, 61:4). Somers is, however, unmoved by these material hardships and contests Jaz’s motives for emigration by asserting his own “fascination” with the “magic” of Cornwall (*K*, 61:14). Jaz is uncomfortable with the notion that he has abandoned his heritage and made a poor choice. He grows defensive: “I’d like you to tell me what’s wrong with Australia” (*K*, 61:28). ““You’ve got the money, you can live where you like and go where you like”” (*K*, 62:4-5), he asserts bitterly to Somers. Moreover, Jaz could return to England if he felt like it: “I could live quietly on what I’ve got whether here or in England”” (*K*, 62:6-7). Jaz personifies the conventionally successful migrant. His material success more than compensates for what he has left

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<sup>17</sup> Burwell, “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading,” p. 206.

behind. He is driven by material goals and can't fathom Somers. "You thinking of settling out here then, are you?", Jaz asks, but Somers's reply is cagey. "No," he replies, adding, "but I don't say I won't. It depends" (K, 61:37-38).

*Kangaroo* deftly explores fluidities and transitions in its exploration of British and Australian identities. While Jaz believes his migration has been a success, from the Australian perspective, he remains a foreigner and suspect. To Callcott, "his nature was secretive, maybe treacherous" (K, 62:2). Like the recently arrived Somers, Jaz is fundamentally an outsider in Australian society and this establishes a potential basis for a deeper understanding between the two British men. Jaz possess an underlying Celtic sensibility. "The Celt needs the mystic glow of real kingliness. Hence his loneliness in the democratic world of industry," the narrator informs us (K, 71:24-26). Like Somers, Jaz has washed up in an alien community. Importantly, however, through the passage of time and because of his pragmatic outlook, Jaz, in his mind, if not Callcott's, has undergone a change of national identity. He has turned his back on his Celtic heritage. Jaz explains the transplanting and metamorphosing which he has undergone in a conversation with Harriett. Jaz praises Harriett and Somers for their "gift of being superior," but argues that Australia "is meant for all one dead level sort of people" (K, 72:20), like himself. Harriett probes this remark: "'You are Australian yourself now, aren't you? Or don't you feel it'" (K, 72:22-23)? Jaz's reply draws a distinction between what one might "feel" about being Australian and the "fact" of being Australian:

'Oh yes, I suppose I feel it', he said, shifting uneasily in his seat. *I am* Australian. And I'm Australian partly because I know that in Australia there won't be anybody better than me. There now.'

'But,' laughed Harriett, 'aren't you glad then?'

'Glad?' he said. 'It's not a matter for gladness. It's a fact.' (K, 72:24-28)

In Jaz's view, therefore, regardless of what he or others might feel or think, he has become Australian by subscribing to the democratic ethos of the country, which Somers "could not stand" (K, 22:4) from the moment he arrived. Harriett challenges Jaz's assumption, but he continues with a warning: "'Here in Australia...we want the new-fashioned sort of people who are all dead level as good as one another'" (K, 72:32-34). Jaz can see that Somers is ill-suited to the ethos of the country: "'But there's something comes over me when I see Mr

Somers thinking he can live out here, and work with the Australians. I think he's wrong – I really do” (K, 72:40-73:1-2). Somers, of course, has sensed this himself since his early feeling that Australia is “absolutely and flatly democratic” (K, 21:40). There are no “superior classes” for him to mingle with (K, 21:10). We are reminded of Lawrence’s diverse social and artistic networks, and his participation in Lady Ottoline Morrell’s circle. Australia can not offer this. It is socially backward. “To Somers,” company with the Callcotts “was like being back twenty-five years, back in an English farm-house in the Midlands” (K, 36:1-2).

The social isolation which Somers feels as a foreigner in Australia, and the aggressive nationalism of Cooley, Struthers and Callcott, is one of the things that reminds him of his bitter experience of the war recounted in “The Nightmare,” where, like Lawrence, he was perceived as “a foreigner[...]just because he had a beard” (K, 223:9). During the war, Somers was outraged, since he had felt himself to be “one of the most intensely English men England ever produced” (K, 223:10). His acute sense of Englishness is, therefore, integral to his resistance to Australia, and to his becoming Australian. From an Australian point of view, as a recently arrived Englishman, Somers is stigmatised as a “pommy.” Jaz is spared this epithet. “Pommy” was recently coined in Lawrence’s time, having been first recorded in 1913.<sup>18</sup> Lawrence’s fascination with the etymology of the word, and his horror of its derogatory connotations are apparent in *Kangaroo*, register the insult embodied in the word, and its association with migration (K, 381). Callcott says to Somers insultingly: “You blighters from the Old Country are so mighty careful of risking yourselves” (K, 142:4-5). Somers is still smarting the next day, and we infer that Callcott has called Somers a “pommy:”

And Jack’s rebuke stuck in his throat. Perhaps after all he was just a Pommy, prescribing things with overmuch emphasis, and wanting to feel God-Almighty in the face of unborn events. A Pommy is a newcomer in Australia, from the Old Country.

*Teacher:* Why did you hit him, Georgie?

*Georgie:* Please miss, he called me a Pommy.

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<sup>18</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50183703?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=pommy&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50183703?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=pommy&first=1&max_to_show=10)>.

*Aussie*: (with a discoloured eye): Well y'are one, ain'cher? Can I help it that cha're one?

Pommy is supposed to be short for pomegranate. Pomegranate, pronounced invariably pommygranate, is near enough rhyme to immigrant, in a naturally rhyming country. Furthermore, immigrants are known in their first months, before their blood "thins down", by their round and ruddy cheeks. So we are told. Hence, again, pomegranate, and hence Pommy. Let etymologists be appeased: it is the authorised derivation.

Perhaps, said Somers to himself, I am just a Pommy and a fool. If my blood had thinned down, I shouldn't make all this fuss over sharing in with Kangaroo or being mates with Jack Callcott. If I am not a ruddy Pommy, I am a green one. (*K*, 147:20-38)

This passage is an important illustration of the novel's exploration of British migration and national identities, and suggests that there are peculiar transitions involved in an English person becoming Australian. The novel, as I have already noted, having introduced the inhabitants of Australia as "British Australians" and "Cockney Australians" early on, with "pommy" again invites the reader to ponder the distinctions and transitions between being "British" and "British Australian," and "Australian.". Somers *is* a pommy because he is a newcomer, like "Georgie" in the *Bulletin* extract. But his identity is negotiable. He has the option of becoming an Australian, like Jaz. Somers could, like the Australians "take things as they come" and "unlearn a lot" while "his blood thins down" (*K*, 148: 3, 6-7). The problem is that this would be "dead against the sound old British tradition" (*K*, 148:8-9). For Somers, however, the process of becoming Australian carries the risk of degeneration:

'Thin, you Australian burgundy,' said Somers to his own body,[...]. Yet he said to himself: 'Do I want my blood to thin down like theirs?'—that peculiar emptiness that is in them, because of the thinning that's gone out of them? Do I want this curious transparent blood of the antipodes, with its momentaneous feelings and its sort of *absentness*?' (*K*, 148:12-20)

There is a sense at this point, that Somers is poised between resisting and letting himself “become” Australian. Somers speculates that, despite the rebuke entailed in his being a pommy, and in rejecting the Australian “absentness,” he might yet learn something in Australia: “But of course till my blood has thinned down I shan’t see with their eyes” (*K*, 20-21). He articulates “a new vow: not to take things with too overwhelming an amount of emotional seriousness” (*K*, 149:3-4). Somers re-assesses his own nature, inscribed as it is with characteristics of British chauvinism: “Mr Somers had to take himself to task, for his Pommy stupidity and his pommigrant superiority” (*K*, 149:27-28). .

### *The Possibility of Settlement*

Despite Somers’s earlier, Ovidian sense of exile, the intuitive Jaz is aware that Somers, against his own misgivings, is beginning to adjust to Australia:

‘You’ve got a bit of an Australian look this morning about you,’ he added with a smile.

‘I feel Australian. I feel a new creature. – But what’s the outcome?’

‘Oh, you’ll come back to caring, I should think: for the sake of having something to care about’. (*K*, 203:35-39)

Somers feels his blood might indeed be thinning down and that Australia’s isolation and environment may also be bringing about a physical change in him. He speculates that he, like Australians, could learn not to care about the troubled wider world:

‘It’s wonderful to be empty. It’s wonderful to feel this blue globe of emptiness of the Australian air. It shuts everything out.’ Protested Richard.

‘You’ll be an Aussie yet,’ smiled Jaz slowly.

‘Shall I regret it?’ asked Richard.

The eyes of the two men met. In the pale grey eyes of Jaz something lurking, like an old, experienced consciousness looking across at the childish consciousness of Somers, almost compassionately: and half in mockery.

‘You’ll change back before you regret it,’ he said. (*K*, 204:19-28)

But Jaz is also aware that Somers is only playing with possibilities, that he will “change back” to being English. Somers responds viciously to this last remark, not enjoying being on the receiving end of Jaz’s homespun if insightful wisdom. “‘Are you wise, Jaz? And am I childish?’” Somers demands (*K*, 204:29). Jaz’s accusation recalls Callcott’s earlier jibe at Somers, that he could never really be serious about becoming an Australian. At this point, Somers stands exposed as romantic and insincere about his intentions towards Australia. Jaz, with his coal business, and the Australians, with their ambitious political ideals, are committed to their work in Australia. Ultimately, Somers the poet, can never make this sort of practical commitment.

Somers also feels the challenge of emigration in correspondence from England. He receives “fourteen letters” mid way through his stay in Australia, most of which irritates him through their triviality and self importance (*K*, 153:5). Two of these letters, however, engage emigration. In one, a tourist friend in Europe refers to a ship crowded with migrants, leaving Somers oppressed and suffocated: “And in spite of all Somers’s love of the Mediterranean, the thought of sitting on a third class deck with eight hundred emigrants including babies made him almost sick” (*K*, 152:12-14). Somers is repelled by the mass movement of humanity which migration entails. More significantly, Somers also receives a letter from his sister in which she broaches the subject of her and her husband emigrating to Australia:

A letter from Somers’ sister: ‘Louis has been looking round everywhere to buy a little farm, but there doesn’t seem to be a bit of land to be got anywhere. What do you think of our coming to Australia? I wish you would look for something for us, for we are terribly fed up with this place, nothing doing at all—’ (*K*, 152:31-35)

This “letter” is significant because it recalls the Lawrence family connection with migration to Australia depicted in “The Primrose Path.” And like his sister, Somers too is “fed up” with England and the “horrible staleness of Europe” (*K*, 153:21-22). His sister’s query about “coming to Australia” is also partly his own – and we may infer, partly Lawrence’s. Lawrence did receive a letter from his sister Ada Clarke while at Thirroul, and although he

noted in his reply that “Australia is awfully nice,” he informed her that “one does not feel one belongs” (iv. 254). He did not, however, in his reply address any question of settlement on the land, such as is contained in the fictional letter to Somers.

Harriett Somers expresses the domestic aspects of the Somerses exploration of settlement in Australia and she appears to reflect Frieda Lawrence’s wishes to settle somewhere more permanently, possibly Australia. In a letter Lawrence wrote between Fremantle and Sydney we find evidence of Frieda’s hopes for their stay in Australia. From the ship on “the Gt. Australian Bight, rolling on again” Lawrence informed Koteliansky that “Frieda wants to have a little house and stay a few months” (iv. 241). In another letter the same day, to Jan Juta, Lawrence jeered that Frieda “still hankers after ‘a little ’ome of ’er own.’ I, no” (iv. 244). In her autobiography *Not I, But the Wind...*, published twelve years later, Frieda wrote: “I wanted to go to Australia, it attracted me,” and: “I would have liked to stay in Australia and lose myself, as it were, in this unborn country but Lawrence wanted to go to America.”<sup>19</sup> Lawrence reported on 30 June 1922: “Frieda loves it here” (iv. 271). In the novel we learn of Harriett’s similar urge to settle, that the Somerses “had been on the move for four months, and she [Harriett] felt if she could but come to rest anchor somewhere in a corner of their own, she wouldn’t much care where it was” (K, 11:27-29). Harriett’s vision of longer term settlement is rebuffed by Somers: “‘What, start colour-washing walls—?’” he sneers, suspicious of excessive domesticity (K, 12:3). Harriett, however, becomes contented in Australia because “her revulsion from Australia had passed quicker than his” (K, 67:24-25). She feels there is a chance to live a new life in Australia, if only Somers could suspend his restlessness:

In her heart of hearts she said she wanted to live alone with Somers, and know nobody, all the rest of her life. In Australia, where one can be lonely, and where the land almost calls to one to be lonely—and then drives one back again on one’s fellow-men in a kind of frenzy—Harriett would be quite happy, by the sea, with a house and a little garden and as much space to herself as possible, knowing nobody, but having Lovatt always there. And he could write, and it would be perfect.

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<sup>19</sup> Frieda Lawrence, *Not I, But the Wind...* (New York: The Viking Press, 1934), pp. 118, 121.



But he wouldn't be happy—and he said so—and she knew it. She saw it like a doom on his brow.

'But why couldn't we be happy in this wonderful new country, living to ourselves. We could have a cow, and chickens—and then the Pacific, and this marvellous new country. Surely that is enough for any man. Why must you have more?'

'Because I feel I *must* fight out something with mankind yet.'

[...]'When I make up my mind that it's really no good, I'll go with you and we'll live alone somewhere together, and forget the world. And in Australia too. Just like a business man retiring—I'll retire away from the world, and forget it. But not yet.' (K, 67:31-40, 68:1-7, 23-26)

Here we feel we are being admitted to a central tension, not only in the Somerses reaction to Australia, but in Lawrence's and Frieda's as well. "This would be a wonderful country if one wanted to withdraw from the world: really. It has a sustaining magic of its own," Lawrence wrote (*iv.* 266). He was captivated by the gentle easefulness of his private, domestic life in Australia. In a glossy letter to his mother-in-law Lawrence celebrated the establishment of their house at Thirroul. He and Frieda sound like a pair of immigrants making good:

We're very nice here. You would like this house very much: the big room with open fire and lovely windows with little red curtains, and the broad *verandahs*, and the grass and the sea always big and noisy under our feet. We bathe at midday, when the sun is very warm, and the beach quite, quite lonely: only the waves. – The township is new and raw – the streets aren't paved, all sand and clay – it's interesting. The people are all very friendly, and yet foreign to me. Postman and newspaper boy come riding on horses, and whistle with a police whistle when they have dropped the letters in – or the newspaper. Meat is so cheap – two good sheep's tongues, 60Pf. – and a great piece of beef, enough for twelve people, two marks. Lovely fruit we have too – apples, pears, passion fruit, persimmons: and marvellous butter and milk. (*iv.* 256)

While this letter is obviously designed to reassure Frieda's mother, it also reports a genuine satisfaction with the material aspects of their new life. Quickly established and comfortable, the Lawrences, however, led an uncharacteristically solitary life in Australia. Lawrence sadly informed Earl Brewster: "We bake good cakes and tarts and eat them *all* ourselves. Perhaps that's the most lonely feeling – eating all the cakes oneself" (*iv*. 266). The solitude and the social isolation were a new experience for the Lawrences, highlighting the reality of settlement in a new place. But the climate was appealing. "The sun is a lovely creature here," Lawrence noted (*iv*. 266).

### *Australia Rejected*

Lawrence could not reconcile his private, domestic satisfaction with life in Australia with his damning view of wider Australian society:

This is the most democratic place I have *ever* been in. And the more I see of democracy the more I dislike it. It just brings everything down to the mere vulgar level of wages and prices, electric light and water closets, and nothing else. You *never* knew anything so nothing, Nichts, Nullus, niente, as the life here. They have good wages, they wear smart boots and the girls all have silk stockings; they fly around on ponies and in buggies—sort of low one-horse traps—and motor-cars. They are always vaguely and meaninglessly on the go. And it all seems so empty, so *nothing* it almost makes you sick. They are healthy, and to my thinking almost imbecile. That's what the life in a new country does to you: it makes you so material, so outward, that your real inner life and your inner self dies out, and you clatter round like so many mechanical animals. It's very like a Wells story—the fantastic stories. I feel if I lived in Australia for ever I should never open my mouth once to say one word that meant anything. (*iv*. 263-264)

For Lawrence, Australia was yet another example of industrial modernity, all the more ghastly because it was so recently created. It is ultimately degenerative – "empty" and the "inner life dies out." But the landscape appealed greatly and it aroused his regenerative

vision of Rananim: “Yet the weird, unawakened country is wonderful – and if one could have a dozen people, perhaps, and a big piece of land of ones (sic) own – But there one can’t,” he observed to Frieda’s sister (*iv.* 264).

In *Kangaroo* it is the political rioting resulting in Cooley’s mortal injury which brings on the crisis in Somers’s attitude to Australia. Somers can not subscribe to Cooley’s political beliefs and denies that he has “killed” (*K*, 335:40) him by withholding his support. As a consequence Somers busies himself with his travel arrangements for America. “He wanted to go quickly” (*K*, 339:15), although America “did not attract him at all” (*K*, 342:5-6). At the same time, Somers continues to be drawn to the landscape. He “feels the voice of Australia, calling low” and he realises that “he loved the country he had railed at so loudly a few months before” (*K*, 342:13). Somers’s vision of Australia is now more closely aligned with Harriett’s. While he continues to reject Australia’s industrialised society, with its “toiling on with civilisation” (*K*, 345:31), in the landscape around Mullumbimby, where he has been living, Somers is drawn to the “thick-headed palm trees” which have been “left behind by the flood of time and the flood of civilisation both” (*K*, 344:21-22). He has “a horror of vast superincumbent buildings” (*K*, 346:34), delighting in Mullumbimby’s “random streets of flimsy bungalows” (*K*, 346:30). And, despite his criticisms of Australian society, Somers concedes that there is much to redeem it when compared with alternatives. Australia “is the land that as yet has made no great mistake, humanly. The horrible human mistake of Europe. And probably, the even worse human mistake of America” (*K*, 347:4-7). Again Jaz probes the depth of Somers’s reappraisal of his surroundings, challenging his resolve:

‘If I stay much longer I shall stay altogether.’

‘Come quite to like it!’—Jaz smiled slowly.

‘Yes. I love it Jaz. I don’t love people. But this place—it goes into my marrow, and makes me feel drunk. I love Australia.’

‘That’s why you leave it, eh?’

‘Yes. I’m frightened. What I want to do is go a bit further back into the bush—near some little township—have a horse and a cow of my own—and—damn everything.’

‘I can quite understand the ‘damn everything’ part of it,’ laughed Jaz. ‘You won’t do it though.’ (*K*, 347:21-30)

Somers's sentiments closely resemble Lawrence's own: "If I stayed six months I should have to stay for ever...and go bush, he wrote" (*iv.* 275). It is both too easy and too difficult to stay in Australia. It is too big a step, emotionally. "I don't want to give in, you see. Not yet. I don't want to give in to the place. It's too strong. It would lure me quite away from myself. It would be too easy. "It's too tempting. It's too big a stride, Jaz," Somers laments (*K*, 348:3-6). Lawrence explained the impact of Australia to Katharine Susannah Prichard in similar terms: "Too far for me: strains my heart reaching," he wrote (*iv.* 273).

In Lawrence's original manuscript version, the conversation between Somers and Jaz reported above is greatly extended, running to ten pages, which points to the strength of Lawrence's struggle to come to terms with Australia. In the first few pages Somers makes much more of his desire to live in the bush, and Jaz's repudiation is more condescending:

'Just put it off for a while, as you may say,' he laughed. "But you amuse me Mr Somers, you really do.—I know what you mean, I think. But I can't quite see you going nigger—going bush.—Why not stop and see how things go with us—in Sydney."

[...]'You see, Mister Somers, it's all very well going bush. But men of your stamp and education either have to kill themselves in the bush, or else come out again later on and take a share in things again.'

[...]'Stop here a bit, then see,' said Jaz.

'No—no—if I stop here I shall go back into the bush and let my beard grow scraggy and pass out of the scheme of things. That's a solution—and a tempting one. Australia fairly *calls* one to it. I wonder you don't all do it.'

(*K*, 472)

Jaz's presumption about the negative aspects of "going bush" takes on a more overtly degenerate, Conradian dimension in manuscript. While Lawrence admired "*early* Conrad" (*iii.* 167), and there are some interesting parallels in their employment of degenerationist imagery, which I will discuss in chapter 6, Lawrence rejected what he saw as his "giving in" (*i.* 465). Hence, Somers feels he can retreat to the bush without collapsing like Conrad's Kurtz. For Lawrence, the bush is associated positively with Rananim, it would be regenerative.

Surprisingly, Harriett, in the final chapter, articulates a brief, perverse and, to my mind, unconvincing reversal of her earlier enthusiasm for Australia. She “had sudden, mad loathings of Australia” (K, 351:2-3). This seems to be a poor dramatic contrivance and Harriett’s new insights into Australia are not revealed. Only a short time earlier Callcott has questioned the Somerses about their departure. “Mrs Somers want to go?” Callcott asks. “Not very emphatically” Somers concedes (K, 338:36-37). As the novel draws to a close, however, Harriett swings back, and the Somerses begin to feel the pain of their imminent departure. Somers beholds the glory of “the bush flowering at the gates of heaven” around “Mullumbimby” while he prepares to leave Australia (K, 355:10-11). He asks Harriett: “Do you wish you were staying?” Harriett replies: “if I had *three* lives I’d wish to stay. It’s the loveliest thing I’ve *ever* known (K, 356:10-12). Somers feels that he is leaving a land which in the end, although exotic, is none-the-less British and familiar. In “leaving Australia,” therefore, he is leaving the British Empire, “leaving his own British connection” (K, 357:24-25). Writing his last post card from Australia, Lawrence asked Koteliensky simply: “How do you like the look of Thirroul? The houses are all wood and tin – but it is nice here, so easy, and sunny” (iv. 282). Somers’s departure is, perhaps, all the more poignant because Lawrence wrote most of the final chapter in hindsight, during revision of the novel in America and it appears to be coloured by a deep nostalgia.

While the Seltzer edition of *Kangaroo* ends with the Somerses on the ship bound for America still moored, but with their “attachments” to Australia “broken” (K, 358:7), the Secker edition contains a page of additional text depicting the Somerses passage through Sydney Harbour, bound for New Zealand (K, 476). Further text not included in either edition portrays the Somerses experience of Wellington, and further highlights the importance of migration in the novel. While Australia had sought to attract them as migrants, Harriett and Somers are dealt with roughly by the “Immigration Authorities” in Wellington (K, 476). Harriett is kept waiting for her landing card because she “was not born in England—or the Empire” and has “come under the restricted immigrants class” (K, 477). Somers is outraged and after viewing Wellington, he and Harriett have “less desire than ever to stay in this cold, snobbish, lower middle-class colony of pretentious nobodies.” Whatever curiosity about New Zealand had been aroused in Lawrence by his reading of Samuel Butler’s satirical *Erewhon*, and his friendship with Katherine Mansfield was apparently destroyed. From Wellington he wrote simply: “Ricordi,” to Mansfield (iv. 283),

and he told his sister Ada: “Don’t want to stop here” (*iv.* 283). Lawrence’s quest at the edge of empire was finished.

6. ASPECTS OF DEGENERATION IN *KANGAROO*<sup>1</sup>

*Kangaroo* is Lawrence's first fictional evocation of Australia after his actual experience of the country and is certainly his, and perhaps *the* quintessential novel of Australia.

Lawrence wrote the bulk of it in six weeks (*K*, xxxv), and much of the novel's power derives from its journalistic immediacy and its foundation in autobiography, which I have already referred to. More profoundly, Lawrence, unlike any other modernist writer, because of his working class background, his personal experience of Australia, and his restless quest to shape his life beyond that experience, was uniquely placed to *see* the putative "working man's paradise" which the still "British" Australia had, in the eyes of many, become by 1922. Lawrence depicts a colonial Australia beset with a strange mix of arrogance and insecurity. At the same time, he places Australia in a wider global context, engaging the political and social anxieties of the day – about politics, gender relations, and the future of Britain and its empire in the post-war period, and, as I discussed in chapter 5, emigration.

Whereas Lawrence's earlier representations of Australia in *The Lost Girl* and *Aaron's Rod* were positive, offering the possibility of personal and social renewal, in *Kangaroo*, he registers deep disappointment with the society and culture he finds in Australia. In doing so, Lawrence engages several of the late Victorian discourses of social and cultural degeneration which originated around the 1880s, in response to the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, and which endured until around World War II. Through its engagement with theories of degeneration, *Kangaroo* depicts a pessimistic view of the prospects of British culture, both in Australia and in Britain itself. Richard Somers, the novel's anti-hero, describes himself as "a pessimist, a black pessimist about the present human world" (*K*, 41:4-5), and in Australia he finds further evidence for this view. Somers's pessimism can be located in the wider social and political anxieties articulated by degenerationists. In chapter 1, I examined the origins of degeneration theory and how Lawrence's work has been seen as articulating and reflecting broader anxieties about the health of British society expressed by degenerationists. David Trotter's observation, for example, that the story of Gudrun and Gerald Crich in *Women in Love*

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<sup>1</sup> An extended version of this chapter, "Aspects of Degenerationism in D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*," appears in the *D. H. Lawrence Review*, Volumes 32-33, 2003-2004, pp. 87-101.

incorporates “the language” of “degeneration theory,”<sup>2</sup> may also be applied to *Kangaroo* with even greater force. This is captured in Somers’s sense of regression in Australia, his feeling that he might “drift, drift into a sort of obscurity, backwards into a nameless past” (*K*, 178:6-7). Criticism of *Kangaroo* has tended to overlook its concerns with degeneration, focussing instead on its broad themes of love and politics, and the novel’s celebrations of landscape. A contemporary reviewer from the *Times*, quoted on the dust jacket of the American Seltzer edition of 1923 remarks that *Kangaroo* “might be called an inquisition into love.”<sup>3</sup> Australian critics such as A. D. Hope and Robert Darroch have, respectively, been largely concerned with the accuracy of Lawrence’s depictions of Australian character,<sup>4</sup> and the historical basis of the diggers’ activities Lawrence portrayed in the novel.<sup>5</sup> In his introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Kangaroo*, Bruce Steele points to the importance of “the visual accuracy of [Lawrence’s] descriptions of scenery, and his vivid evocation of the physical and social atmosphere of Australia” (*K*, xxiii). American and English critics, such as Harry T. Moore,<sup>6</sup> and John Worthen have also focused on the centrality of the political element in the novel, with Worthen also noting the importance of the novel’s exploration of marriage.<sup>7</sup> These aspects of the novel are all significant, and illuminate both novel and novelist. In this chapter, however, I examine how the fear of degeneration expressed in *Kangaroo*, further informs our understanding, not only of Somers’s anxieties about the possibility of settlement in Australia, but those of Lawrence as well. To complicate matters, for Lawrence, drawing on Nietzsche, degeneration may also appear as a necessary precursor to positive impulses to regeneration. The narrator remarks in chapter xvi, just before the riot in which Ben Cooley (*Kangaroo*) is killed: “There is always the unstable *creative* element in life” (*K*, 295:3), and the “phenomenon of revolution[...]a great disruptive outburst” (*K*, 301:5-6). It is not surprising, therefore, that Lawrence adopted the phoenix as his emblem. This chapter examines Lawrence’s engagement with both the negative and positive aspects of degeneration in *Kangaroo*.

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<sup>2</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1923), review quoted on dust jacket.

<sup>4</sup> A. D. Hope, “D. H. Lawrence’s *Kangaroo*: How it Looks to an Australian,” in *The Australian Experience*, ed., W. S. Ramson (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> Darroch, *D. H. Lawrence in Australia*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> Harry. T. Moore, *The Intelligent Heart: The Story of D. H. Lawrence* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd., 1955), p.292.

<sup>7</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, pp. 268-269.



*Colonial Decline*

*Kangaroo* displays acute anxiety about the condition of white civilisation in an Australia which still exhibits its recent colonial origins. It also expresses widely held concerns about the effect of life in Australia on racial health, the role of women, and the future of the British Empire. These themes point to *Kangaroo*'s links with a range of novels from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with degenerationist themes, including works by H. Rider Haggard, H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad. Haggard's *She*, a novel of colonial adventure expressing fears of atavism and the emerging modern woman, is referred to explicitly in *Kangaroo* (K, 132). In regard to Conrad, there are some interesting parallels between *Heart of Darkness* and *Kangaroo*. There is evidence that Lawrence read at least six Conrad novels and two before 1922, but there is no direct evidence that he read *Heart of Darkness*. There is, however, a passage in *The Boy in the Bush*: "And beyond the porch is the heart of darkness, where the lords of death arrive" (BB, 296:39-40), from which we might speculate that he did read Conrad's novel. The parallels between the two novels do, in any case, reflect the continuities in the engagement of degenerationist discourses in modern literature between the *fin de siècle* and the early 1920s. At the broadest level, both novels problematise European imperial endeavour and contain strikingly similar themes and images of degenerationist anxiety. There are some similarities in the characterisation of Kurtz and Kangaroo, with both displaying degenerate characteristics – Kurtz through his "various lusts", his being "hollow at the core,"<sup>8</sup> and Kangaroo through his atavistic "kangaroo face" (K, 113:33). Both are charismatic but ultimately deluded. Kurtz asserts that he had "immense plans,"<sup>9</sup> while Kangaroo asks Harriett: "If I have to be a fat old Kangaroo[...]to carry young Australia in—why—do you really resent it" (K, 120:23-25)? Both Kurtz and Kangaroo perish as a result of their delusions, producing serious doubts about the value of their respective colonial visions. In both novels the landscape is depicted as exotic to Europeans, as well as sinister and representative of an earlier, more primitive era. Marlow states that "going up the river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth,"<sup>10</sup> while Somers observing the landscape from behind his house at Mullumbimby sees "jungle, impenetrable with tree-

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

ferns" (*K*, 177:17), likening the landscape to "the previous world!— the world of the coal age" (*K*, 178:2-3). Marlow feels one is "cut off for ever from everything you had known once,"<sup>11</sup> and Somers, as I have noted, feels he will "drift, drift into a sort of obscurity" (*K*, 178:6). In the face of such regressive environments, imperial effort is seen to be intrusive and ineffectual. Marlow, from his French steamer, sees "settlements some centuries old still not bigger than pin-heads," and a "god-forsaken wilderness with a tin shed."<sup>12</sup> Somers, leaving Sydney by train, sees dreary suburbs and then "waste marshy places, and old iron and abortive corrugated iron 'works,'" followed by "the weary half established straggling of more suburb" (*K*, 76:20-25).

Through Somers, the novel records disdain for the British culture which has been established in Australia. For Somers, Australia is seen to be a complete reversal of life as he has known it. So different, he speculates, that "if St Paul and Hildebrand and Darwin had lived south of the equator, we might have known the world all different [...]" (*K* 15:35-37). This early reference to Darwin is a revealing framing device for Somers's anxiety in Australia. It acknowledges both the pervasiveness of Darwinian evolutionary theory, and the capacity for its contestation. In the southern hemisphere such purportedly universal theories, such as Darwinism may be reversed, or simply do not apply. Thus, later in the novel, the narrator articulates an alternative model of progress and development:

To call this connection the will-to-live is not quite sufficient. It is more than a will to persist. It is a will-to-live in the further sense, a will-to-change, a will-to-evolve, a will towards further creation of the self. The urge towards evolution if you like. But it is more than evolution. There is no simple cause-and-effect-sequence. (*K*, 295:11-16)

The individual has the power to realise his or her own "self" in a way which resists received Darwinian assumptions of linear "progressive" evolution.

At the commencement of *Kangaroo*, a dichotomy is firmly established between the old world of Europe and the recently colonial Australia. As they stroll around the Conservatorium of Music and Macquarie Street in Sydney, just as we can imagine Lawrence and Frieda might have done in 1922, Richard and Harriett Somers are presented

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.29.

as exotic, variously “Russian” (K, 7:19) or “Fritzie” (K, 8:7), somewhat serious and “foreign looking,” in contrast to the relaxed and ironically denoted “good Australian[s]” with their “air of owning the city” (K, 7:11-12). Somers’s Englishness is not apparent at first, foregrounding his ideological remoteness from Britain. The irony in regard to the Australians, coming as it does at the end of the novel’s opening paragraph, is easy to overlook. It heralds, however, the problematising of Australia’s colonial and democratic promise, which forms the core of Harriett’s and Somers’s response to Australian society. Where they might have found vitality, ideas and a developing Australian aesthetic, they find smugness and mediocrity in a culture derived from elsewhere and which is characterized as excessively democratic. Somers’s response to Sydney is: “This London of the southern hemisphere was all, as it were, made in five minutes, a substitute for the real thing” (K, 20:18-20). It lacks centrality, “is the other end of English and American business” (K, 27:30-31). The beauty of Sydney and its famous harbour is heavily qualified. “Oh but it’s a wonderful harbour,” Harriett observes, adding disparagingly: “What it must have been like when it was first discovered” (K, 12:39-40). She sees a view of “dog kennely houses” and laments: “Is this all men can do with a new country? Look at those tin cans!” (K, 13:7-8). Harriett’s reaction, however, is not simply one of aesthetic disappointment. She is remarking that the British civilisation re-planted in Sydney is degenerate. Somers has a more intense reaction to Australian civilisation, hoping that the sea “would send a wave about fifty feet high round the whole coast of Australia” (K, 26:10-11). In its early scenes, the novel also problematises the Australian landscape. The landscape has an “invisible beauty” which is “beyond the range of our white vision” (K, 77:2-3). Europeans are an “alien people” (K, 14:40), are “the myriad intruding white men” (K, 15:2), and thus the novel questions very deeply the British colonial presence on the far-flung continent.

Somers associates a still colonial Australia, despite its newness, with the decline of an earlier civilisation, that of “ancient Egypt” battling with “its plagues of mice and rats and rabbits and snails” (K, 49:20-21). This surprising and negatively framed paradox in which Somers sees the new Australia as being akin to a past epoch is given pseudo-scientific authority through the narrator’s reference to the work of Flinders Petrie, a contemporary Egyptologist. “The words ‘new country’ had become like acid between his teeth” (K, 49:23-24), the narrator informs us, adding that Somers “was always recalling what Flinders Petrie says somewhere: “‘A colony is no younger than the parent country’” (K, 49:24-25).

Lawrence appears to have been pre-occupied with Petrie at this time since he also referred to him in similar terms in a letter sent from Australia (iv. 240). The source of Somers's reference is not known, but Lawrence was familiar with Petrie's work and had read his *History of Egypt*, and possibly *The Religions of Egypt*, by 1916.<sup>13</sup> Petrie, in another work *The Revolutions of Civilisation*, published in 1911, argues in contemporary degenerationist terms, the inevitability of the rise and fall of civilisations, believing that the (then) present democratic era will in turn pass in the wake of superior cultures:

When democracy has attained full power, the majority without capital necessarily eat up the capital of the minority, and the civilisation steadily decays, until the inferior population is swept away to make room for a fitter people.<sup>14</sup>

In this passage, Petrie links democracy with social and cultural decline. Lawrence articulates a similar view in an earlier novel. In *The Rainbow* Ursula remarks angrily to Skrebensky that "only degenerate races are democratic" (R, 427:7). If we consider the problematising of democracy which gradually unfolds in *Kangaroo*, assumptions consistent with Petrie's resonate in the novel, forming an important piece of its degenerationist frame. Anne Fernihough, in noting the importance of Petrie's *The Revolutions of Civilisation* in the development of theories of cultural decadence, suggests that: "In view of the evidence we have of Lawrence's reading, it seems more likely that it was through another channel that Lawrence first encountered [the] notion of cultural flourishing and decadence."<sup>15</sup> This channel, she observes, was Nietzsche.<sup>16</sup> Importantly, however, Fernihough alerts us to Petrie's association of democracy with decay.<sup>17</sup> Given Lawrence's reference to Petrie in *Kangaroo* and the novel's overall critique of what Lawrence saw as the excessively democratic Australian society, we may speculate that he also read Petrie's *The Revolutions of Civilisation* as well as his *History of Egypt*.

In addition to the likely influence of Petrie, Lawrence demonstrates a broad affinity with the Nietzschean view of cultural degeneration. Daniel Pick observes: "According to

<sup>13</sup> Burwell, "A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence's Reading," pp. 239, 244.

<sup>14</sup> W. M. Flinders Petrie, *The Revolutions of Civilisation* (London: Harper, 1911), p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Nietzsche, degeneration was to be welcomed as the catalyst for regeneration and the birth of the superman.”<sup>18</sup> In *The Will to Power*, which Lawrence had read by 1909,<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche makes several assertions of this kind such as: “The levelling of the mankind of Europe is the great process which should not be arrested; it should be accelerated.”<sup>20</sup> At the end of World War I Lawrence wrote despairingly that a Nietzschean collapse seemed the only hope: “About the world, I feel that nothing but a quite bloody, merciless, almost anarchistic revolution will be any good for this country, a fearful chaos of smashing up” (iii. 215). Lawrence is partly letting off steam here. Later he writes: “I don’t want to be in it,” that he would rather simply get away from England (iii. 215). The imagery is important, however, and endured in Lawrence’s writing. In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence again proffers the Nietzschean view of regenerative destruction. Richard Somers remarks: “like Nietzsche, I no longer believe in great events,” and: “Sometimes I feel I’d give anything, soul and body, for a smash in this social-industrialised world we’re in” (K, 161:31-32; 38-39). Somers, however, is less sanguine than Nietzsche, fearing that after the destruction there would still be “just people – the same people after it as before” (K, 161:40; 162:1). It is Somers’s hoped-for degeneration, which I see as revealing Lawrence’s “positive” degeneration.

### *Physical and Moral Contamination: Rats and Women*

What of the Australian people who inhabit the dog kennels? In contrast to the Somerses, Jack and Victoria Callcott are a working class couple – Jack is one of the “bunch of workmen” in the novel’s opening scene (K, 7:3). They are seen by the Somerses as being morally debased, as offensively carnal in their relationship. In a hurry to get home to make love to her husband, Victoria is “entirely unashamed, her eyes glowing like an animal’s” (K, 48:13-14). Harriett remarks indignantly: “I think they might have waited just *two* minutes” (K, 48:21-22). And, referring to Jack’s arm around his wife, Harriett adds: “Really, it was as if he’d got his arm round all the four of us!” (K, 48:25). Harriett fears moral contamination from the Australian couple. The theme of contamination is further developed by a graphic piece of narratorial juxtaposition, where we are informed that this “was a period when Sydney was again suffering from a bubonic plague scare” (K, 48:28-

<sup>18</sup> Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 227.

<sup>19</sup> Burwell, “A Catalogue of D. H. Lawrence’s Reading,” p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche quoted in Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 227.

29). Harriett and Somers are, therefore, in danger of physical contamination as well. They scour their cottage ruthlessly and most mornings Somers has

the nauseous satisfaction of finding a rat pinned by its nose in the trap, its eyes bulging out, a blot of deep red blood just near. Sometimes two rats. They were not really ugly, save for their tails. Smallish rats, perhaps only half grown, and with black, silky fur. Not like the brown rats he had known in the English country. (*K*, 49:9-13)

The incident with the Callcotts and the rat plague in Australia, develop the dichotomy between English and Australian society and culture, introduced at the beginning of the novel. Rats are not only literal carriers of disease and symbols of parasitism, but also harbingers of degenerate situations and impulses, a trope which extends back to Bram Stoker's Gothic classic, *Dracula*, where "the rats and his own kind" help the Count go about his business.<sup>21</sup> This is an example of what Andrew Smith, citing Lawrence's engagement with ideas of degeneration, as explicated in the studies by William Greenslade, Daniel Pick and David Trotter, sees as Lawrence's ability to straddle both "a modernist and a Gothic discourse."<sup>22</sup> Smith is concerned particularly with the role of vampirism and degeneracy in representations of masculinity in *Sons and Lovers*, and points to the possible origins of William Morel's fiancée, Lily Western in "Stoker's vampire, Lucy Westenra."<sup>23</sup> The rats in *Kangaroo*, however, point to another example of Lawrence's engagement with gothic discourse. And, while Somers sees the Australian Victoria Callcott as nobly "innocent," resembling a "sacred prostitute" (*K*, 33:2, 4), rather than a vampire, her later portrayal of her sexual freedom stems from a similar degenerationist anxiety about the overt sexuality of women found in gothic literature.

David Trotter notes the controversy which surrounded the first "sex novels" of the 1890s and observes that from around 1905, when the women's suffrage campaigns were under way, "[...]women's sexuality, and their right to express it as they chose, was a common theme[...]" in novels by authors associated with the women's movement, and

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<sup>21</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, n. d.), p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Smith, "Vampirism, Masculinity and Degeneracy: D. H. Lawrence's Modernist Gothic," in *Gothic Modernisms*, eds. Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 152, 150.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

writers such as Joyce and Lawrence.<sup>24</sup> Trotter also contextualises this development, noting that “Edward Garnett (an important early influence on Lawrence) drew on degeneration theory to explain the polemical intention of the modern sex novel.”<sup>25</sup> Trotter notes that Garnett, who was drawing on Maud Churton Braby, wrote: ““We are no longer breeding from our best but from our worst equipped stocks,””<sup>26</sup> a further indication of the pervasiveness of eugenics, which I noted in chapter 2. Marianne DeKoven argues that “shifts in gender relations were a key factor in the emergence of modernism,” that modernist writing embodied an “unprecedented preoccupation with gender,” and that there was “a fascination and strong identification with the empowered feminine.”<sup>27</sup> This pre-occupation in modernism can be traced back to novels such as Haggard’s *She*, where Ayesha is a threat to both masculinity and empire. Mrs Callcott’s name, Victoria, which ironically recalls the British Queen Victoria, empress of empire, is symbolic of her new-woman sensuality and potency. Although a married woman, Victoria is not defined or confined by her domesticity and, potentially at least, monogamy. Towards Somers she is curious and spontaneous, and a high level of sexual tension develops between them. Somers is variously fascinated and repelled. Soon after they meet Somers feels her offering herself “like the sacred prostitutes of the temple” and considers that she “had none of the European rapacity which is so hateful in the Old World” (*K*, 33:4-5, 13-14). At first Somers’s appraisal of old world and new world women is neatly polarised, part of his early hopeful expectations about life in Australia. Australians display a “subtly developed desire for freedom” and Callcott trusts Victoria “to do as she liked outside his ken” (*K*, 34:24-25). But Somers fears the basis of the Callcott’s marriage, “not liking the thought of applying the same prescription to his own marriage” (*K*, 34:28-29). He is later sorely tempted by Victoria’s charms: “She was so comely, like a maiden just ready for love[...]offering herself[...]in the name of the god of bright desire” (*K*, 142:28-30). Somers, however, refuses her, even though he assumes that Callcott would turn the other way, and Harriett would see a measure of integrity in his desire. Somers rejects Victoria because “in his heart of hearts” he is “stubbornly puritanical” (*K*, 143:28). More profoundly, Somers associates Victoria with her primitive surroundings which, for him, characterise Australia. She is an

<sup>24</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 198.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Garnett in David Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> Marianne DeKoven, “Modernism and Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 174.

innocent, “too remote from the old world” (K, 142:23), uncertain in the face of the civilized Harriett and Somers. Ultimately she is seen by Somers as a throw-back to an earlier era – a degenerate colonial, displaying “in the last issue the twilight indifference of the fern-world” (K, 179:24-25). In his eyes, Victoria’s apparently “progressive” morality is atavistic, suggesting that in Australia, Darwinian evolution may indeed work in reverse.

Victoria, therefore, challenges Somers’s view of marriage, most critically, his own. He distrusts her “weapon-like momentaneity” (K, 143:18), and attempts to discount her beauty through his rejection of “the desire for a visual object” (K, 143:31). Another problem for Somers is that it is Victoria who initiates intimacy. Somers must be master. In the turgid chapter “Harriett and Lovatt at Sea in Marriage,” Somers claims that his wife Harriett must believe in his future, “his mystic vision of a land beyond the chartered world” (K, 175:1-2). This chapter is remarkable for the strength and complexity of its theme, exploration of gender relations, its abstruseness and irony, and its innovative breaking from the linear narrative of the novel as a whole. Significantly, Somers’s view of the husband as “the lord and master” is lampooned by the narrator and rendered “out of date” (K, 169:7-8), a “stunt of ‘male’ activity” (K, 175:24). Yet the insistence with which Somers strives for authority leads us to doubt the narrator’s distance from Somers’s stated position. Somers expects one day to earn his authority through recourse to unexplored, and perhaps indefinable passions. He believes that “he must open the doors of his soul and let in a dark lord” and that “the rest would happen” (K, 176:4, 9-10). This is the kind of renewal Somers seeks in relations with women, not the relaxed, freer morality displayed by Victoria. Notwithstanding the Somerses individual battles for supremacy within their marriage, ultimately *Kangaroo* upholds Harriett as a woman superior to Victoria. She displays old-world class. ““Oh, Mrs Somers is all right. She’s a fine woman, she is. I suppose I ought to say lady, but I prefer a woman myself”” (K, 338:38-40), Callcott remarks. However, the novel rejects the possibility that she might squander her superiority by remaining in Australia. Callcott’s eugenic plea that: ““A woman like that ought to stop in a new country like this and breed sons for us”” (K, 339:2-3) is firmly rebutted.

### *Good and Bad Blood*

In addition to the gothic pre-occupation with diseased blood, in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence frequently deploys blood to delineate racial difference and racial health. Lawrence became



acutely aware of his “whiteness” after his experience of Ceylon, which he disliked, on the way to Australia. He wrote: “The east, the bit I’ve seen, seems silly. I don’t like it one bit” (iv. 221). *Kangaroo* reflects Lawrence’s preoccupation with race at this time. Seeing Asian races as tyrannical, Somers states that “the real sense of liberty only goes with white blood” (K, 90:27-28). On meeting Ben Cooley, also known as Kangaroo, the leader of the paramilitary diggers movement, Somers feels him to be “quite ugly” and although embodying “the very best that is in the Jewish blood,” ultimately he finds him “stupid and kangaroo-like” (K, 110:33-35, 36). David Glover notes that the pseudo-science of physiognomy, like phrenology, was a “convenient method for ascertaining and depicting character in nineteenth-century novels.”<sup>28</sup> Lawrence’s description of Cooley shows that this device continued well into the twentieth century.

In *Kangaroo*, the health of the white race is measured by the quality and consistency of its blood. In addition to the fear of moral and physical contamination, there is the fear that living in Australia, with its warm climate, induces a physical change in the blood of the European. This is illustrated through a conversation in which blood consistency acts as a metaphor for, or measure of, racial health. “Well I should say it takes about four or five years for your blood to properly thin down” [in Australia], a Welshman “Mr Evans” (K, 145:10-11, 19) says to Harriett and Somers with apparently scientific certainty. The narrator observes that Australians believe that “the blood is thinner out here than in the Old Country.” Somers’s “blood took this thinning very badly,” the narrator informs us, with a hint of jocularly, adding that Somers feared that “in the night, in his sleep, the metabolic change was taking place fast and furious” (K, 145:28-29). The likelihood of physiological decline in Australia is extended into the fear of a more overarching, if unspecified, psychological and abstracted loss of belonging, self, and culture which confronts the European in Australia. In the case of the Welshman, “the thinning down had left him looking as if he felt he lacked something” (K, 145:22-23). And while Somers, drawing on his hopes for renewal in Australia, wonders if this metamorphosis could be a good thing, ultimately, as noted in chapter 5, he can not risk this dilution. In *Kangaroo*, the possibility of blood thinning, as much metaphorical as physiological, is presented as further evidence of the degeneracy which befalls the white British race in Australia.

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<sup>28</sup> David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 71.

Alarmingly for Somers, Australia's thinned down and rat-infested society is a poignant reminder of an earlier crisis – the condition of England in the war. In the chapter "The Nightmare," Somers, despite being "one of the most intensely English little men England ever produced" (K, 223:9-10) had, before coming to Australia, shunned England because of the "mob-spirit" (K, 213:3) which had developed. The novel makes one of its strongest degenerationist statements when the narrator announces in epochal terms:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the old London collapsed, the city, in some way, perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors. [...]

No man who has really consciously lived through this can believe again absolutely in democracy. (K, 216:30-38)

Wartime society, recalling the gothicism of *Dracula*, is corrupted with a blood-lust. "And at home stayed all the jackals, middle-aged, male and female jackals. And they bit us all. And blood-poisoning and mortification set in," the narrator informs us (K, 217:19-20). Although the attitudes expressed here are fictional, it is clear that they reflect the intensity of Lawrence's own position. Mark Kinkead-Weekes points to Lawrence's profound rejection of wartime England and the importance of "The Nightmare" as a register of that experience (TE, 352, 471).

In wartime England, as in 1920s Australia, it is urban industrial society which is the main source of degenerationist forces. In rural Cornwall, however, Somers finds temporary solace during the war. Yet, even here, the threat remained. His cottage was raided by police. Again, in Oxfordshire, he knows he is being watched and begins to "*feel* a criminal" (K, 249:31). "The foul, dense, carrion-eating mob were trying to set their teeth into him. Which meant mortification and death" (K, 249). But Somers's Cornish experience enables him to become infused with the ancient Celtic spirit of the place. And this ancient spirit as with "the terror of the bush" (K, 14:21) in Australia, has a frightening dimension. Having deplored the waste of manhood in the trenches, Somers recalls an apparently more noble form of blood-spilling. Somers evokes "Druidical...blood sacrifice" (K, 237:28, and experiences an almost vampiric "desire" for "human sacrifice" (K, 238:14). Here, blood-letting is valorised, if romanticised, and offered as regenerative. So too in

Australia: “Australian soil is waiting to be watered with blood” (K, 89:37-38) – which, of course, ignores the historical spilling of Australian Aboriginal blood by Europeans. In these passages, Lawrence presents an ancient and sacred, regenerative vision of blood-letting, in opposition to the degenerate equivalent in modern, “civilised,” wartime society.

Somers’s rarefied musings on sacred redemptive blood-letting are also readily distinguishable from the brutality he finds in the “realpolitik” of peacetime Australia, which parallels the atmosphere of London in the war. Callcott, after recounting his part in the collapse of the riotous political meeting, where he beats three socialists to death with an iron bar, lapses into an erotic swoon. The “VC” (K, 320:24), Australian war hero, the industrial man employed in a motor works, finally reveals himself to be a degenerate brute. He tells Somers:

‘Cripes, there’s *nothing* bucks you up sometimes like killing a man – *nothing*. You feel a perfect *angel* after it. [...]

Having a woman’s something, isn’t it? But it’s a flea-bite, nothing, compared to killing your man when your blood comes up. Bah-having a dozen women all at once wouldn’t compare with it. [...] I can go to Victoria, now, and be as gentle –’ [...]

‘And you bet she’ll like me.’ (K, 319:22-23, 28-31, 37)

Callcott personifies Lawrence’s idea of the corrupted modern working class man, materialistic, and lacking in spirituality. We are also reminded of the excessively modern and debased manifestation of this type which Lawrence associates with Australia in the character of Sutton in “The Primrose Path,” already discussed. Callcott, however, is even more vicious, more degenerate than either Sutton, or the more generalised London wartime mob. The tone of the above passage is unambiguous. The reader is urged to reject Callcott’s eroticising of violence – his blood-lust. While Cooley’s death in the riot points to the novel’s successful killing off of hopes that political ideals can regenerate society, Callcott’s escape from punishment for his killings during the riot strongly suggests that the methods he uses to secure those ideals are those which are rewarded, and which will endure in Australia. If Australia’s future is in the hands of Callcotts, the novel proposes, there is little hope of a regenerated British civilisation. The figure of Callcott is indicative of the profound pessimism in *Kangaroo*.

*Australia, Asia and the End of Empire*

Callcott is fearful of “coloured labour” (K, 90:7) competing with Australia, and one country in particular, saying of Japan: “They’d squash us like a soft pear” (K, 89:40). Significantly, Callcott’s fear of Japan represents a specifically Australian fear. Somers does not see a Japanese threat. Rather, on two occasions, through the narrator, Somers is located in an Australia which is re-imaged as Japanese, not British. The coast near the town of Mullumbimby where he lives seems to be “like a Japanese print” (K, 86:29). After climbing the escarpment behind the town, the view for Somers “is suggestive of a Japanese landscape” (K, 177:29-30). These renderings of a Japanised Australia, although partly aesthetic, also admit the possibility, even desirability, given the problematising of Australian culture in the novel, that Australia could benefit from being re-colonised by Japan. Here, it appears, the novel is nudging a degenerate Australia further back, in conventional Darwinian evolutionary terms, into the arms of a purportedly inferior race. Australia is more rightfully a part of Asia than it is Europe, the novel seems to be suggesting. It is useful to re-state Somers’s remark that: “the real sense of liberty only goes with white blood” (K, 90:27-28), in this context. But the “white blood” in Australia is out of its proper context, and is not in good health in Australia. As also noted earlier, it is “alien” to the continent (K, 14:40). The sense of a beneficent Japan extending its influence into Australia and an ailing Empire is further bolstered if we consider the extended ending contained in the first English edition of *Kangaroo*. Somers, as he departs from Sydney, sees in neat juxtaposition “a Nippon steamer lying at her berth,” as well as “a black P. and O. boat[...]looking so like India” (K, 476).

The positive references to Japan in *Kangaroo* form part of the novel’s wider denunciation of British colonial effort in Australia, and the British Empire more generally. In a conversation between Somers, and the minor, but importantly equivocal Jaz asks Somers directly: “And what about the Empire?” (K, 62:32). Somers replies: “I’d say to India and Australia and all of them the same-if you want to stay in the Empire, stay, if you want to go out, go” (K, 62:34-35). Trewhella then postulates: “Supposing Australia said she was coming out of the empire and governing herself. What do you think she would make of it” (K, 62:38-40)? Somers replies:

By the looks of things, I think she would make a howling mess of it. Yet it might do her good [...]. England has already kept the world steady so far [...]. Now she's not keeping it very steady, and the world's sick of being bossed, anyhow. Seems to me you may as well sink or swim on your own resources. (*K*, 62:41, 63:1)

While walking in the Palace Gardens in Sydney, Somers looks out into the harbour and sees an Australian and a British warship, flags flying, anchored alongside each other. He has already decided to leave Australia and “the two ships were like bits of palpable memory images” (*K*, 305:29-30). The ships are “rusting into the water” (*K*, 305:28) and symbolise the decline of British strength and British endeavour in Australia. In the context of a rising Japan, the decadent forces at work in Britain reported in “The Nightmare,” Lawrence’s appraisal of the “silliness” of life in Ceylon, and the degeneracy facing the British settlement in Australia, the “rusting” ships exemplify the decline of the British Empire. And Sydney, although “a real metropolis” (*K*, 305:7-8) is slipping back to its pre-British origins “lost and undiscovered, as it was in Captain Cook’s time” (*K*, 305:22-23). Australia, Somers ponders, could therefore, rather than providing an inspiration to the world, be “the country where men might live in a sort of harmless Eden” (*K*, 305:38-39). This is as far back as one can regress in the Christian view of the world. For the present, however, Australia is, however feebly, still British and attached to her empire. Thus, when Somers comes to leave Australia and strikes out for America, he says from the ocean liner, depicted so strikingly on the dust jacket of the American edition: “Farewell Australia, farewell Britain and the great Empire” (*K*, 358:5-6). For Somers, this annunciation of English effort is deeply nostalgic, but also bitter and ironic.

## 7. "KANGAROO" AND THE SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA

Lawrence is well-known for his poems in which animals assume vividly anthropomorphic characteristics. The much anthologised "Snake," where the snake is ennobled "like a king in exile" (CP, 351) is probably his best-known poem. "Kangaroo" is one of Lawrence's many animal poems and was first published in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* in 1930 (CP, 24). Vivian De Sola Pinto observes in his introduction to *Complete Poems*: "Jessie Chambers in her memoir wrote that 'a living vibration passed between' Lawrence and 'wild things'" (CP, 11). Certainly in "Kangaroo," as in many of his poems about animals, there is a remarkably rich empathy between author and subject. In common with all the poems in the section Lawrence entitled "Animals," the locale of "Kangaroo," Sydney, is shown, indicating the association of the poem with his visit there in 1922. In many of the animal poems Lawrence distils the essence of the animal's country of origin or association into the animal itself. This is evident in "Kangaroo." Frequently, the animals are metaphors for societies or people. In "The Ass," written in Taormina, "the ass is a primal creature, and never forgets./The Steppes of Tartary" (CP, 379-380). In "Elephant," written in Kandy, Lawrence wrote: "In elephants and the east are two devils, in all men maybe" (CP, 390). In "The Red Wolf," written in Taos, the first-person narrator appears to identify with the red bearded authorial Lawrence living in New Mexico with the native red wolf: "Touch me carefully, old father,/My beard is red" (CP 405). De Sola Pinto remarks that with *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* Lawrence "found a new theme which freed him from the trammels of autobiography" (CP, 11). The echo of Lawrence's red beard in "The Red Woolf," however, demonstrates that this is not necessarily the case. Lawrence wrote himself into several of these poems, including, as I will show, "Kangaroo." Moreover, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* may also be regarded as a chronicle of Lawrence's journeys within Italy, and from Italy, via Ceylon and Australia, to America. In "The Evening Land," for example, which is about neither bird, beast nor flower, Lawrence records the foreboding with which he regarded America: "Shall I come to you, the open tomb of my race?" (CP, 289). Many of the poems in *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* therefore, are intensely personal, and often autobiographical. At the same time, in these poems Lawrence is very much concerned with what he entitled the opening chapter of *Studies of Classic American Literature*, "The Spirit of Place" (SCAL, 13:2). In "Kangaroo," Lawrence identifies a uniquely Australian spirit in

the kangaroo subject of the poem. In “Kangaroo,” the Kangaroo (the animal is always capitalised) symbolises the Australian continent. And Lawrence continues his enquiry, begun in *Kangaroo*, into the nature and meaning of an essential Australia. Although Lawrence was not intending to write a second novel of Australia at this time, the trajectory of “Kangaroo” away from the industrial modernity of *Kangaroo* foregrounds the utopian possibilities of the Australian bush presented in *The Boy in the Bush*. In this respect, “Kangaroo,” written as it appears to have been, after he had written the bulk of *Kangaroo*, is both thematically and chronologically, a bridge between his two major Australian novels.

With “Kangaroo,” Lawrence evokes an elemental Australia unencumbered by British civilisation, the “thousands of small promiscuous bungalows” (*K*, 25:33), which infest Sydney in *Kangaroo*. Thus the poem is an attempt to uncover the “real” Australia which Lawrence felt lay beneath the surface, which in the novel the narrator reports is “so unapproachable” (*K*, 14:1), because of its “invisible beauty” (*K*, 77:2), and because it is “so aboriginal” (*K*, 77:6). In the poem, therefore, Lawrence presents a non-Europeanised vision of Australia, which in many respects is a reversion to his early imaginings of Australia as oppositional and “other” in relation to England, as found, for example, in *The Lost Girl*. The first line of “Kangaroo” emphasises Australia’s location at the opposite pole of the world to Europe, beginning with a statement about living “in the northern hemisphere” (*CP*, 392). The “Kangaroo,” by contrast, is “antipodal” (*CP*, 392). Importantly, whereas in *Kangaroo* Australia is “on the other end of English and American business” (*K*, 27:31), in “Kangaroo” Australia reverts to its pre-European status as the “silent lost land of the/South” (*CP*, 394). It has no relation to Europe or America – it represents neither a threat nor a promise to the health of modern society. Australia is not on the end of anyone else’s business, as it is in *Kangaroo*. It simply “is.”

### *Kangaroo and “Kangaroo”*

Although serving as a bridge between Lawrence’s two major Australian novels, “Kangaroo” may also be linked stylistically and thematically with its novelistic namesake. In both works there is a difficulty in separating the voices of author and narrator, and novelist and poet. *Kangaroo* is written by “Somers,” who is “a poet” (*K*, 14:4). Somers visits Sydney’s Taronga Park Zoo towards the end of the novel and feeds a kangaroo “peppermint sweets” (*K*, 339: 28). The narrator in “Kangaroo” feeds a kangaroo at the

same zoo “peppermint drops” (*CP*, 393). The precise relationship between the novel and poem, however, is not easily determined. The first textual record of “Kangaroo” occurs in the assembly of poems put together by Lawrence in early 1923. The poem is included in the manuscript of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* which Lawrence sent to Thomas Seltzer on 7 February 1923 (*iv*. 378). In the absence of compositional textual evidence, however, the date and place of composition of “Kangaroo” must remain speculative, and we cannot prove whether Lawrence wrote the poem before or after the novel, or indeed whether he wrote it in Australia or America. It is, however, useful to delve as far as we can into the origins of the poem. Christopher Pollnitz has explored textual problems associated with dating Lawrence’s poetry and the associated vagaries of compositional locale, and while noting Lawrence’s first reference to “Kangaroo” in February 1923, observes that “documentary evidence cannot support what is also plausible, that he wrote “‘Kangaroo’ before sailing from Sydney to San Francisco.”<sup>1</sup> We may speculate, therefore, that Lawrence could have composed “Kangaroo” after he’d “packed up the MS.” of *Kangaroo* on 17 July (*iv*. 277), towards the end of his stay in Australia, or en route to America, or during September, after his arrival in America. There is, however, a strong pointer towards later composition for the poem. While Lawrence wrote the bulk of *Kangaroo* in Australia, he revised the novel extensively in America. Bruce Steele notes that in producing the Cambridge edition “emendations have been adopted from DHL’s revisions (TSIR), in October 1922, to the first typescript (TSI) prepared from the MS” (*K*, 2), and that the zoo scene in *Kangaroo* was inserted by Lawrence in the course of the TSIR revisions (*K*, 470). This, I suggest, lends considerable weight to “Kangaroo” also having been written in America, rather than in Sydney, despite Lawrence recording “Sydney” at the end of the poem (*CP*, 394). As Pollnitz also observes, Lawrence in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* records, through his place names on poems “a simplified and hence in some degree fictionalised account of his movements.”<sup>2</sup> It is still, however, not absolutely clear whether the composition of the poem preceded the insertion of the zoo scene in the novel in October, or vice versa. Again, however, there is a pointer. Lawrence composed his first American poem “Eagle in New Mexico” on 11 October 1922, at the time he was revising

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Pollnitz, “Travel and Transmission: Textual Instability in the Tourist Poems of Lawrence’s *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*”, *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*,” Volume I, Number I (2006), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Pollnitz, “Hello – Peppermints,” email to David Game 17 December 2007.



*Kangaroo*.<sup>3</sup> This may well have been his *first* burst of poetic energy after sending off the manuscript of *Kangaroo*, and leaving Australia, and he may have composed “Kangaroo,” at this point. It is, however, also impossible to positively establish the chronology in regard to “Kangaroo” and Lawrence’s American poems of this period. There are, however, significant thematic linkages between “Kangaroo” and “Eagle in New Mexico,” as well as the later “American Eagle,” which Lawrence had composed by 14 March 1923, and which he described as his “last poem” of America he would write for the time being (iv. 409), which associate “Kangaroo” with these American poems. In these three poems, the kangaroo and eagle convey the essence of Australia and America respectively. In “Kangaroo” we find the “antipodal eyes” of the kangaroo, and her “blood, dripping sack-wise down/towards the earth’s centre” (CP, 394). In “Eagle in New Mexico” there is similar imagery, but in reverse, the eagle receiving its “God-thrust” from “the fire that boils in the molten heart of the world” (CP, 782). Lawrence also identifies the kangaroo and eagle with the indigenous populations of their respective continents. In “Kangaroo” the eyes of the kangaroo resemble those of “an Australian black-boy” (CP, 394), and the eagle in “American Eagle” belongs to the “Amerindian” (CP, 414). On balance, Lawrence’s insertion of the zoo scene in *Kangaroo* in America, together with the linkages between “Kangaroo” and Lawrence’s American “eagle” poems, suggest to me that Lawrence composed “Kangaroo” in America, rather than in Australia.

Regardless of the uncertainties of chronology, it is useful to compare the similarities between the poem and the zoo scene in the novel. The similarities in the evocation of the kangaroo's heavy, elemental groundedness are striking. In the poem we find:

But the yellow antipodal Kangaroo, when she sits up,  
Who can unseat her, like a liquid drop that is heavy, and  
just touches the earth.  
The downward drip  
The down-urge.

Delicate mother Kangaroo  
Sitting up there rabbit-wise, but huge, plumb weighted,

<sup>3</sup> Pollnitz, "Travel and Transmission," p. 63.

And lifting her beautiful slender face, oh! So much more  
                   gently and finely lined than a rabbit's, or than a hare's,  
 Lifting her face to nibble at a round white peppermint  
 Drop, which she loves, sensitive mother Kangaroo.

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.  
 Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,  
 So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many  
 empty dawns in silent Australia. (*CP*, 393)

In the novel, the kangaroo(s) Somers feeds peppermints to is similarly symbolic of the pre-European spirit of Australia – it is similarly “weighted” to the continent:

A girl he had met, a steamer-acquaintance, had given him a packet of extra-strong peppermint sweets. [...] And one golden brown old-man kangaroo, with his great earth-cleaving tail and his little hanging hands, hopped up to the fence and lifted his sensitive nose quivering, and gently nibbled the sweet between Richard's fingers. So gently, so determinedly nibbled the sweet, but never hurting the fingers that held it. And looking up with the big, dark prominent Australian eyes, ...  
 The gentle kangaroos, with their weight in heavy blood on the ground, in their great tail! (*K*, 339:26-40; 340 2-3)

In the novel, the kangaroo(s) takes on a double symbolism. The kangaroo of the novel recalls that other “Kangaroo” of the previous paragraph, Ben Cooley (*K*, 339 18). Cooley is about to die in the aftermath of the political riot, and his nickname “Kangaroo” now appears bitterly ironic. “He *must* die” (*K*, 339:19), since Somers believes him to have been rightly punished for his excess of ““loving”” and ““liking”” towards humanity (*K*, 339:22). Cooley, the vanquished leader, who is a Jewish intellectual and idealistic “kangaroo” is a travesty of the “real” Australian kangaroo. In the novel, therefore, the kangaroo is emblematic of Somers's turning away from the British-Australian society which Ben Cooley sought fruitlessly to control. Viewing the pair of kangaroos at the zoo Somers feels not “love[...]but a dark, animal tenderness, and another sort of consciousness, deeper than

human" (*K*, 340:4-5). This, the poem implies, is the "real" Australia. In the poem, therefore, we find the "real" kangaroo of Australia, not the European would-be. Rather than being strident, assertive and external like Cooley/Kangaroo, the Kangaroo in the poem subtly awaits "a new signal from life" (*CP*, 394). "All her weight" is "dripping sack-wise down/towards the earth's centre," and the narrator sees this as enabling her to access a deeper, non-living knowledge (*CP*, 394). She is urged, therefore, to "leap, then, and come down on the line that draws to the earth's deep, heavy centre" (*CP*, 394). In both the poem and the novel, therefore, the kangaroo as spirit of Australia is symbolic of a hidden and regenerative Australian consciousness below the external layer of British colonial settlement.

I have previously outlined Lawrence's contestation of Darwinian evolutionary theory. In *On The Origin of Species*, Darwin asserts: "It may be doubted, for instance, whether the Australian marsupials[...]could compete successfully" with European "carnivorous, ruminant and rodent mammals."<sup>4</sup> This, Darwin states, is because: "In the Australian mammals, we see the process of diversification in an early and incomplete stage of development."<sup>5</sup> While there is no evidence that Lawrence *consciously* refutes Darwin's proposition, it is significant that he does so, through the perfected nature of the animal he presents in the poem. The kangaroo is not deficient, endangered or inferior in Darwinian terms. She is quite the reverse, she is unassailable: "When she sits up, /Who can unseat her" (*CP*, 392). Moreover, she is superior aesthetically to equivalent old world mammals: "Her beautiful slender face, oh! so much more/gently and finely lined than a rabbit's, or than a hare's" (*CP*, 393). For Lawrence, the kangaroo is complete in herself, and possesses its own unique and mystical connection with "the earth's centre" (*CP*, 394). Lawrence also links the kangaroo with Australia's indigenous population: "How full her eyes are, like the full fathomless, shining eyes/of an Australian black-boy" (*CP*, 394). Together, the kangaroo and the Australian Aborigine complete Lawrence's picture of Australia, constituting the essential living elements of the continent. "Kangaroo," therefore, like its novel namesake, contests the British colonisation of Australia, and champions a pre-British Australia.

Despite the attitude of the poem outlined above, there are limits to Lawrence's Australian perspective. The poem and the novel "view" the kangaroo from a British or

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<sup>4</sup> Darwin, *On The Origin of Species*, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

European point of view. It is the impliedly British narrator in the poem, and the British Somers in the novel who feed the animals sweets. And despite the zoo locale, neither poem nor novel sees the kangaroo as being in captivity. The kangaroo does not, therefore, serve as a metaphor in the poem, for the alienation of Australian indigenous people and their continent. After a short time in America, however, Lawrence came into closer contact with indigenous populations, Native Americans in New Mexico, and Mexicans in Mexico. In his American poems, Lawrence begins to engage indigenous populations with greater intensity, and in his second novel about Australia, *The Boy in the Bush*, written in America and informed by his American experience, Lawrence, evokes a stronger Aboriginal presence. This builds on the more subtle presence in *Kangaroo*, and forms part of his continuing critique of the British colonial project in Australia begun in that novel and continued in "Kangaroo." In the next chapter I examine the presence of Aboriginal Australia in both *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*, and its place in Lawrence's regenerative visions of Australia.

8. THE RACE FOR THE BUSH: BRITISH RACE REGENERATION, AND THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL PRESENCE IN *KANGAROO* AND *THE BOY IN THE BUSH*.

There is a trajectory in Lawrence's engagement with non-British people which begins with the exclusively British characterisation in *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser* and *Sons and Lovers*, through *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *The Lost Girl*, where we find European (and in the latter novel, Asian and Australian characters), which culminates with the fully developed Native American characters in "The Woman Who Rode Away," and the charismatic Mexican Indian leaders in *The Plumed Serpent*. Lawrence's representation of race in his major Australian fiction falls between the two poles represented by *The White Peacock* and *The Plumed Serpent*. Australian Aboriginality is a subtle yet pervasive presence in his major Australian work and marks an important transition in Lawrence's interest in, and attitude to, race. In *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* the English protagonists' experiences of Australia include exposure to an elusive but distinct Australian Aboriginality. The exposure is positive and Aborigines do not attract the undiluted negative appraisals accorded to, for example Asian and Jewish races in *Kangaroo*, although anxiety at interracial relations is evident in *The Boy in the Bush*. As in the poem "Kangaroo," Lawrence represents Australian Aboriginality in these novels as one of the essential and symbolic elements of Australia. Both novels signal a continuing transition in Lawrence's early Anglocentric outlook towards racial difference, which begins in earnest with *The Lost Girl*. It is important to note that Lawrence commenced *Quetzalcoatl* (1995) an early version of *The Plumed Serpent*, in early 1923, prior to commencing work on *The Boy in the Bush* in the middle of that year. It is likely, therefore, that his absorption of Mexican Indian culture while writing *Quetzalcoatl* at Chapala, stimulated the modest but significant Australian Aboriginal presence in *The Boy*.

Both Australian novels fall well short of championing contemporary indigenous issues, as we understand them today. Their admission and exploration of an Aboriginal presence, however, in a manner which avoids condescension and early twentieth-century assumptions about "subject" and "dying races," reveal Lawrence to be swimming against mainstream currents, aligning him with contemporaries such as E. M. Forster, who were contesting the widely-held notions of white racial superiority which underpinned British

and European identity and colonial ambitions. Lawrence also avoids the stereotypical dichotomy of contest between European and savage which are hallmarks, not only of late nineteenth-century British adventure fiction, such as that of H. Rider Haggard set in Africa, but twentieth-century writers as well, such as Zane Grey, whose western novels Lawrence dismissed. Importantly, Lawrence's interest and respect for Australian Aborigines also derives from his reading of anthropology. However, he drew imaginatively on his reading rather than rehearse orthodoxy. Like Lawrence himself, the protagonists in *Kangaroo* and *The Boy*, while receptive to the presence of Australian Aborigines as the defining presence of the continent, are ultimately resolute in their determination to retain their Englishness. One of Lawrence's fundamental concerns in these novels is the threat to the health of Englishness, presented by degenerate, modernistic forces, and consequent need for regeneration. There can be no return to earlier modes of existence, and *The Boy* expresses fear of miscegenation. Both novels, however, suggest that an awareness of the positive forces associated with Australian Aboriginality, is fundamental to the regenerative possibility offered by Australia.

### *New World Writings*

The war destroyed Lawrence's belief in the integrity of the English people, and Europeans in general. Lawrence's war-time voice sounds through the narrator in *Kangaroo* who states bitterly: "The English soul went under, in the war, and as a conscious, proud, adventurous, self-responsible soul, it was lost" (K, 222:18-19). Lawrence's revulsion towards England drove him abroad, first to Europe, and then to Ceylon, Australia, America and Mexico. In many respects, and particularly in regard to race, Lawrence's Australian and American writing, written between 1922 and 1925, can be treated as a single corpus in which he attempts to define his own attitudes to race in response to his new experience of non-European cultures in new world continents. Thus in *Kangaroo* (1923), essays such as "Indians and an Englishman" (1922), written soon after arriving in America and the bulk of *Kangaroo* had been completed, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), *Quetzalcoatl* abandoned in 1923 (1995), *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), "The Woman Who Road Away" (1925) and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), Lawrence utilises racial themes to evoke the "spirit of place," the term he coins in *Studies*, and explores racial difference, particularly miscegenation. Importantly, however, Lawrence introduced these themes in

*The Lost Girl* (1920), where Alvina falls in love with an Australian with a hint of Aboriginal blood, eventually fleeing to Italy with her Italian lover Ciccio. Fascination with racial difference is also at the heart of Lawrence's travelogue, *Sea and Sardinia* (1923).

The chronology of Lawrence's Australian and American fiction helps to account for the interconnectedness of his writing about the two continents. *Kangaroo*, written in mid-1922, is Lawrence's first exploration of an indigenous presence in a new world setting. His interest in race deepened considerably soon after his arrival in America at the end of 1922, as evidenced in poems such as "O! Americans," where he beseeches Americans to enter into some soul-searching over their attitude to "the old American aborigines" (CP, 777). In *Quetzalcoatl* begun in early 1923, Lawrence first explores a love match between an English woman and a Native Indian Mexican, but the female protagonist cannot accept the prospect of interracial marriage. Later in 1923, Lawrence wrote his second Australian novel, *The Boy in the Bush*, and stimulated by his earlier visit to Australia, and his more immediate experience of Native Americans in New Mexico and Mexicans in Mexico, again embraces Australian Aboriginality, and for the first time introduces an unambiguously Aboriginal character, Lily. Again he explores and rejects, the possibility of miscegenation. It was after *The Boy* that Lawrence resumed work on the abandoned *Quetzalcoatl*, later transforming it into *The Plumed Serpent* where he finally, if somewhat equivocally, depicts an interracial marriage.

#### *Lawrence's Early Race Anxiety*

Lawrence's early observations on race are loaded with the prejudice which was almost universal in Edwardian England and which was a feature of wider degenerationist anxieties. An early letter demonstrates his early deep suspicion of racial difference. In 1910 he informed Louie Burrows:

At the petite danse last night there were three Asiatics from India. They are extraordinarily interesting to watch – like the beasts from the jungle: but one cannot help feeling how alien they are. You talk about 'brother men': but a terrier dog is much nearer kin to us than those men with their wild laughter and rolling eyes. Either I am disagreeable or a bit barbaric

myself: but I felt the race instinct of aversion and slight antagonism to those blacks, rather strongly. It is strange. (i. 215)

The three men at the dance are overburdened racially as “Asiatics from India” who are also “blacks.” Lawrence’s tone is acutely Anglocentric, smug and assured. He writes from Sussex, a home county at the heart of England, of his belief in his native English superiority. “A terrier dog is much nearer kin,” he suggests. Evident too, however, is anxiety. Lawrence shares the contemporary Social Darwinist and degenerationist concern about the health of the white race. Lawrence fears that he will somehow be pulled back by association with “the beasts from the jungle.” The Indians are impliedly barbaric, since their presence threatens to stir up the “barbaric” in himself. Lawrence’s comfortable sense of English superiority was shaken by the war. Hugh Stevens notes that, as a result of his experience of World War I as exemplified in “The Nightmare” in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence’s “intense identification with the English nation came into crisis.”<sup>1</sup> This “crisis,” we must add, “in which the old world ended” (*K*, 216:30), fed his belief that the whole of modern industrial civilisation was in need of spiritual regeneration. By the 1920s Lawrence came to see non-British races as being able to inform the regeneration of the English race.

#### *Lawrence, Anthropology and Australian Aborigines*

Near the end of his life Lawrence, in declining a representation from Mollie Skinner for his assistance with another of her manuscripts, “Eve and the Land of Nod,” explained his rejection, in part, on the grounds of on his unfamiliarity with Australian Aborigines, stating that he “never saw a black boy except on the streets of Sydney” (vii. 36). This might suggest that any search for an Aboriginal presence in Lawrence’s work is either futile or, at best, fraught. In the case of *The Boy in the Bush*, this line of reasoning might also suggest that the depictions of Aborigines are Skinner’s rather than Lawrence’s. Lawrence did, however, make an intense study of aspects of Aboriginal culture through his reading of anthropological works by Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison, who drew on Frazer. He was more familiar with Australian Aborigines than he admitted to Skinner in his letter.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Stevens, “Sex and Nation: ‘The Prussian Officer’ and *Women and Love*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough, p. 50.



Lawrence read Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) in December 1913, before he read Frazer, and informed Arthur McLeod, a close friend in his youth: "You have no idea how much I got out of that *Ritual and Art* book – it is a good idea" (ii. 119). It is not entirely clear what the good idea is. Harrison's book is a short volume, however, and Lawrence would have read passages such as the one below, which is one of several referring to Australian Aborigines:

In the Kangaroo tribe there were real leaping kangaroos as well as men-kangaroos. The men-kangaroos when they danced and leapt did it, not to *imitate* kangaroos – you cannot imitate yourself – but just for natural joy of heart because they *were* kangaroos.<sup>2</sup>

We may infer that the idea of an Aboriginal spirituality which could so closely identify with kangaroos appealed to Lawrence who had by this time abandoned Christianity. Lawrence discusses Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) and *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) in a letter to Bertrand Russell two years later on 8 December 1915 (ii. 470). At this time Lawrence was deeply pessimistic about the war and the health of British society, which in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell the previous day he had described as "full of unripe ulcers" (ii. 468). Frazer's work seems to have made a similar impression to Harrison's. Lawrence wrote:

I have been reading Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy*. Now I am convinced of what I believed when I was about twenty – that there is another seat of consciousness than the brain and the nerve system: there is a blood-consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary mental consciousness. (ii. 470)

In the same letter he goes on to explain: "And this is the origin of totem: and for this reason some [Aboriginal] tribes no doubt really *were* kangaroos: they contained the blood-knowledge of the kangaroo" (ii. 470). It seems likely that here, Lawrence is either recalling

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1913), p. 46.

Harrison's passage above on the Kangaroo tribe, or drawing directly from Frazer who writes:

Among the Central Australians, we are told, 'the totem of any man is regarded, just as it is elsewhere, as the same thing as himself.' Thus a Kangaroo man, discussing the matter with Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, pointed to a photograph of himself which had just been taken, and remarked: 'That one is just the same as me; so is a kangaroo.'<sup>3</sup>

Lawrence's fascination with the kangaroo totem may help to explain his decision, many years later in *Kangaroo*, to confer on Ben Cooley, the leader of the Diggers political movement, the apparently benign nickname "Kangaroo." His decision may have been inspired by anthropology, albeit leavened with contemporary degenerationist ideas of atavism. Frazer, again drawing on Spencer and Gillen writes: "In the northern tribes all the Kangaroo people recognise the authority of one Kangaroo headman."<sup>4</sup> Thus in *Kangaroo*, Cooley (Kangaroo) may be seen as a false kangaroo headman who is ultimately destroyed because of his idealism. In the same letter to Ottoline Morrell referred to above, Lawrence also outlines the more general significance of Aboriginal blood consciousness, for himself, and for modern society:

This is very important to our living, we should realise that we have a blood-being, a blood consciousness, a blood-soul, complete and apart from the mental and nerve consciousness.

Do you know what science says about these things? It is *very* important: the whole of our future life depends on it. (ii. 471)

Note one to this letter advises that "the word "very" is heavily underlined three times." It is significant that seven years before Lawrence had set foot in Australia, the country's indigenous inhabitants had shaped not only his early conception of Australia, but had shaped his own idiosyncratic metaphysics – his conception of human physical or "blood consciousness" as separate from the intellectual consciousness.

<sup>3</sup> James Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, Volume 1 (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1910), pp. 118-119.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

Christopher Heywood observes that “Lawrence saw his ‘blood-consciousness’ theory as a remedy to the inadequacies of psychoanalytic theory and practice.”<sup>5</sup> Heywood also suggests that Lawrence “complicated the debate by nowhere revealing his sources,” and offers two physiologists from the eighteenth and nineteenth century with whom Lawrence was familiar.<sup>6</sup> We must, however, in light of Lawrence’s anthropological reading, also include Frazer and Harrison as sources. Marianna Torgovnick notes Lawrence’s sporadic engagement with anthropology in novels such as *The Plumed Serpent* and suggests that Lawrence’s “most spectacular example of the anthropological method is the use of African statues” in *Women in Love*.<sup>7</sup> Here Gerald Crich, representing destructive, industrial, modern man “liked to read books about the primitive man, books of anthropology” (*WL*, 232:22-23), reminding us of the potential sterility of such armchair pursuits, and Lawrence’s own reworking of orthodox anthropology, rather than rehearsal. It is Birkin in that novel, the Lawrence figure, who is more in touch with the sensual significance of primitive objects “the African knowledge” of “dissolution,” than Crich, the amateur anthropologist (*WL*, 254:13, 15). In view of the pervasiveness of Lawrence’s references to blood consciousness in his works, Lawrence’s engagement with the anthropology of Australian Aborigines is at least as important an example of Lawrence’s “anthropological method,” as the African examples noted by Torgovnick. In his study of Nathaniel Hawthorne Lawrence writes: “Blood-consciousness overwhelms, obliterates, and annuls mind-consciousness. Mind-consciousness extinguishes blood-consciousness,” seeing the two are forever in conflict (*SCAL*, 83:1; 13-16). In *Fantasia of the Unconscious* Lawrence cites modern humanity’s mentalised “idealism” (*PU*, 155:23), and “sex-in-the-head” (*PU*, 158:10) as instances of profound imbalance. It is this concern with an overly mentalised humanity which is fundamental to the regenerative quest in Lawrence’s Australian novels, and perhaps all his novels. While Fiona Becket is right to point out that, in the strictest sense, Lawrence, in his conception of “blood” here is “not referring to racial criteria,”<sup>8</sup> Lawrence does also differentiate races by blood. He invests Australian Aborigines with a higher level of blood consciousness than industrialised humanity.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Heywood, “‘Blood Consciousness’ and the Pioneers of the Reflex and Ganglionic Systems,” in *D. H. Lawrence New Studies*, ed. Christopher Heywood (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>7</sup> Marianna Torgovnick, “Narrating Sexuality: *The Rainbow* in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*,” ed. Anne Fernihough, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Fiona Becket, “Lawrence and Psychoanalysis” in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough, p. 226

The first of the four volumes of Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* runs to around 500 pages, and most of it is concerned with Australian Aborigines. In addition to its discussions of the spirituality of kangaroos, and blood consciousness, it appears that Lawrence may also have absorbed Frazer's discussion of Aboriginal marriage customs of Central Australia. Frazer quotes from the summative findings of fellow anthropologists Spencer and Gillen:

In regard to marital relations it may be said that the Central Australian native has certain women, members of a particular group, with whom it is lawful for him and for other men also to have relations. [...]a group of men actually does have, continually and as a normal condition, marital relations with a group of women. [...]There is nothing whatever abnormal about it[...] . Even those central and northern tribes of Australia which no longer practise this form of group marriage observe certain customs which seem to be relics or survivals of group marriage, or rather of sexual communism.<sup>9</sup>

In light of the above, it is significant that Lawrence contextualised polygamy in Australia. In chapter xxiv of *The Boy in the Bush* Jack asserts: "The world is all so tame, it's like an idiot to me. A dangerous idiot. So that if I want two wives—or even three;—well, I *do*" (*BB*, 318:21-23). He subsequently attempts to persuade Mary to join him and Monica in his regenerative community in the north-west of Western Australia. It is likely that Frazer's observations on the relative merits of Australian Aboriginal culture also resonate in Lawrence's choice of the north-west of Western Australia as the locale for his regenerative community. Frazer reports: "The natives of the north-western region of West Australia are less decadent than those of the south-western parts, because they have been far less demoralised by contact with whites."<sup>10</sup>

If we examine Frazer's Preface to *Totemism and Exogamy*, which outlines his rationale as an anthropologist, it becomes apparent why Lawrence came to reject orthodox anthropology, preferring to re-work it for his own use. Frazer writes:

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<sup>9</sup> Spencer and Gillen quoted in Frazer, *Totem and Exogamy*, Volume 1, pp. 310-311.

<sup>10</sup> Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, p. 567.

Of late the pace of civilisation has so quickened, its expansion has become so beyond example rapid, that many savage races, who only a hundred years ago still led their old life unknown and undisturbed in the depth of virgin forests or in remote islands of the sea, are now being rudely hustled out of existence or transformed into a pathetic burlesque of their conquerors.

[...]And as savagery recedes further and further into the past, it will become more and more an object of curiosity and wonder to generations parted from it by an impossible and ever-widening gulf of time. Its darker side will be forgotten, its brighter side will be remembered. Its cruelties, its hardships, its miseries, will be slurred over; [...]. So the patriarchal age is invested for us with perennial charm in the enchanting narratives of Genesis and the Odyssey, narratives which breathe the freshness of a summer morning and glister as with dewdrops in the first beams of the rising sun of history.

[...]man perpetually conjures up for himself the mirage of a Golden Age in the far past or far future, dreaming of a bliss that never was and may never be. So far as the past is concerned, it is the sad duty of the anthropologist to break that dream, to dispel the mirage, to paint savagery in its true colours.<sup>11</sup>

There is a grand and poetic sweep to this Preface, encompassing as it does both “Golden Age” and “the pace of [modern] civilisation,” and myths both Biblical and Classical. We can imagine its superficial appeal to Lawrence. More grim, however, is the prevailing Social Darwinian assumption of the inevitability of “savage races” being “hustled out of existence.” And thus, by way of expiation for the extermination of races, “it is the sad duty of the anthropologist” to “dispel the mirage” and “paint savagery in its true colours.” But what are the “true colours” of savagery? For the anthropologist it is the exoticism of costume and arcane ritual. For Lawrence, however, it is something less tangible, deep in the “savage” consciousness which is of interest – the “blood consciousness” he describes in his letters. Lawrence is not interested in tradition and tools, the outward forms of culture, but in the origins in the “savage” of a superior or lost consciousness. Lawrence, therefore, is at odds with anthropologists and always careful to distance his characters from

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

“primitive” cultures, which he does not invest with superiority over the questing Europeans. In America, Lawrence formally denounced the work of anthropologists. “White people always, or nearly always, write sentimentally about the Indians,” he asserts (*MM*, 54). And “so it is with all of them, anthropologists and myth-transcribers and all” (*MM*, 54). This essay was written by 20 April 1924, after Lawrence had completed *The Boy in the Bush*. It points to the reason that Lawrence does not attempt in his Australian novels to portray realistic or “accurate” pictures of traditional Aboriginal life, since he could easily have drawn on Harrison and Frazer. Clearly Lawrence did not wish to be associated with “myth transcribers” and those who sentimentalised indigenous people. And the essay also helps to explain why Lawrence’s characters do not “go native” – for that is degenerative. Ultimately he sought to draw on his own theories of consciousness which challenged anthropological constructions such as Frazer’s “darker side” of “savagery.” Lawrence, therefore, re-works anthropology rather than utilising its “method,” and it is at once the point of origin, and the point of departure for Lawrence’s vision of other races.

In a recent polemical study of the history of the Australian Aboriginal experience of British colonisation, Sven Lindqvist in *Terra Nullius* (2007) provides a valuable context for Lawrence’s engagement with Frazer’s *Totemism and Exogamy* and its focus on Australian anthropology. Frazer draws heavily on the work of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, whose *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) he co-edited with a fellow ethnologist, Edward Tylor, and which “caused an immediate international sensation,” and dominated contemporary anthropological studies.<sup>12</sup> “The Arrernte...suddenly emerged as the best-known, most discussed natives in the world,” Lindqvist observes.<sup>13</sup> Lindqvist also alerts us to the arrogance and the irony of those such as Frazer, who incorporated these studies into their own theories, without first-hand observation:

All the great men of ideas who between 1910 and 1913 were seeking the answer to the puzzle of the birth of mankind among the indigenous peoples of Australia had one thing in common: none of them had been to Australia. [Lewis] Morgan and Engels, Frazer and Freud, Kropotkin, Durkheim and

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<sup>12</sup> Sven Lindqvist, *Terra Nullius: A Journey Through No One’s Land* (London: Granta Books, 2007), p.42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Malinowski all happily discussed the Aborigines' way of life without themselves ever having seen an Aborigine.<sup>14</sup>

Lawrence, while well read, never saw himself as an expert on Aborigines, but it is significant that he both read and absorbed the most up-to-date accounts of Aboriginal anthropology, at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of the diverse (and mistaken, as Lindqvist points out) theorising which occurred across the range of disciplines represented by the above luminaries. Rather, as I will show in my analyses of *Kangaroo*, and more particularly, *The Boy in the Bush*, Lawrence drew selectively and imaginatively on aspects of Aboriginal culture and spirituality that he found in Frazer, while steering clear of the condescending assumptions of savagery and racial hierarchy articulated by Frazer and his contemporaries.

### *KANGAROO*

Lawrence's first sustained contact with non-Europeans was in Ceylon, not long after his experience of Italy and Sardinia, on his way to Australia. His response to Ceylon reveals his state of mind immediately prior to his commencement of *Kangaroo*, and demonstrates the continuation of his pre-war attitude to non-European races, specifically those from the Indian sub-continent. He wrote, after leaving Ceylon, of the "rat-hole religion" of "the Buddha" and that

those natives are *back* of us – in the living sense *lower* than we are. But they're going to swarm all over us and suffocate us. We are, have been for five centuries, the growing tip. Now we're going to fall. But you don't catch me going back on my whiteness and Englishness and myself. English in the teeth of all the world, even in the teeth of England. – How England deliberately undermines England. (*iv*. 234)

The anxiety which Lawrence revealed in his letter to Louie Burrows in 1910 is intensified here. The "three Asiatics from India" in the early letter (*i*. 215) have blown out into a

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

“swarm” in Ceylon. Lawrence fears that the superior English race has degenerated and is soon to be overwhelmed. The more primitive race is going to overrun the more advanced. There is a concomitant chauvinism and racism in Lawrence’s assertion of his English racial pride. Lawrence arrived in Australia immediately after his experience of Ceylon. Most obviously, he did not witness Aboriginal culture in Australia as he did (albeit briefly) Asian culture. There was not the opportunity for him to be overwhelmed. Significantly, however, in his Australian novels we find Lawrence reassessing his earlier somewhat panicked responses to racial difference, and a continuation of his exploration of the regenerative possibility of Australian Aboriginality which first occurred in *The Lost Girl*. A key element of this shift in attitude is Lawrence’s attempt in these novels to identify a way of seeing Australia which is informed by a non-European, Australian Aboriginal presence.

#### *Australian Aboriginal Presence in Kangaroo*

In “The Spirit of Place” in *Studies of Classic American Literature*, completed in 1923, Lawrence writes:

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarised in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. (*SCAL*, 17:17-21)

In the Australian continent Lawrence depicts the Australian Aborigines as the “people” of a “particular locality” – Australia. I have shown that in the poem “Kangaroo” Lawrence links the “antipodal kangaroo” (*CP*, 392) with the Australian Aborigines as way of evoking the pre-European spirit of Australia. “How full her eyes are, like the full fathomless shining eyes/of an Australian black-boy” (*CP*, 394), the narrator relates. In making this link Lawrence draws on his anthropological reading, where he learned that some Aborigines see no distinction between their animal totem and themselves. In “The Spirit of Place,” rather than asserting crude and external racial differentiation, Lawrence writes of differing “vital effluence” and “different polarity.” For Lawrence, the “polarity” in England was “breaking” and there was a possibility that England might “die” (*SCAL*,



17:29-30). The Aboriginal presence in *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* is Lawrence's attempt to evoke the Aboriginal "polarity" in Australia, one which may strengthen the ailing English variety. In both novels, the Aboriginal presence helps to shape the protagonists' perception of the English society they find replicated in Australia.

Scholars have tended to overlook, or understate Lawrence's evocation of Australian Aborigines in his two major Australian novels, *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*. For example, J. J. Healy, in his *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*, although making several references to Lawrence's work, discounts Lawrence's Australian writing *in toto* as just another example of "an Englishman abroad, an innocent abroad."<sup>15</sup> Neil Roberts argues in relation to *Kangaroo* that: "The novel as it actually exists is dependent on the absence of the Aborigine."<sup>16</sup> Roberts asserts that it is only "in the most interesting of his metaphorical 'aboriginal' passages" that Lawrence "appears momentarily to acknowledge that Australia has been experienced by people other than white settlers."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, "there is nothing in the novel to contradict the narrator's "view of Australia as a land without history, or more strictly without a human past, the most extreme of colonialist illusions," he observes.<sup>18</sup> Roberts, in effect, chastises Lawrence for either wilfully or negligently excluding Aboriginal characters from a novel in which they should be active participants. Roberts is searching for a specifically Aboriginal point of view in the novel, and finds its absence a defect. I propose a different reading of *Kangaroo*.

While it can not be argued that there is an Aboriginal point of view in the novel, there is a sustained Aboriginal presence which extends beyond the "metaphorical." The novel's engagement with Aborigines occurs in two ways. First, the narrator attempts to evoke how Somers *feels* as one of the "intruding white men" (K, 15:2) in an Australian landscape where Aborigines have been displaced by English settler society. Second, the novel quotes reportage of how Aborigines of the 1920s interacted with the dominant society. For the first, Lawrence draws on his own experience, and for the second he relies on extracts from the *Sydney Bulletin*. Where Neil Roberts points to "a narrative *desire* for the Aborigine" in *Kangaroo*, and the mere "diffusion in the text" of Australian

<sup>15</sup> J. J. Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia 1770-1975* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978) p. 124.

<sup>16</sup> Roberts, D. H. Lawrence, *Travel and Cultural Difference*, p. 73.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Aboriginality,<sup>19</sup> we may, therefore, identify paradoxically, an Aboriginal “presence,” established through the novel’s insistent and often haunting evocations of Aboriginal absence. The effect in the novel is that Aborigines have only temporarily decamped their country – as when a person leaves a room and one enters to find a curtain still moving. And the novel’s “*desire*” for engagement with Australian Aborigines is actually *realised* through the quotations from the *Bulletin*. While it must be conceded that *Kangaroo* as a whole is more concerned with the effect of British colonisation on British settlers, than on its impact on Aborigines, its assertion of Aboriginality, if subtle and at times equivocal, is significant, both in terms of its contribution to the novel’s critique of the consequences of the European invasion of Australia, and in the wider context of the generally negative evocations of Aborigines in literature. Importantly, the Aboriginal presence in *Kangaroo* constitutes a foundation for a deeper engagement in *The Boy in the Bush*.

In *Kangaroo* Australian Aboriginality is initially introduced as an unsettling and oppositional force, reminiscent of the invasive and threatening presence of “the darkie” Dr Alexander Graham in *The Lost Girl* (LG, 23:27), who is implied to have Aboriginal blood. Richard Somers, apparently in parallel with Lawrence’s own experience, has a terrifying first exposure to the bush in Western Australia. The Aborigines hover just beyond Somers’s white British gaze. The narrator reports:

And then one night at the time of the full moon he walked alone into the bush. A huge electric moon, huge, and the tree-trunks like naked pale aborigines among the dark-soaked foliage, in the moonlight. And not a sign of life – not a vestige.

Yet something. Something big and aware and hidden!...And now, there was something among the trees, and his hair began to stir with terror, on his head. There was a presence. [...]It must be the spirit of the place. (K, 14:14-35)

This passage articulates Lawrence’s own belief in a unique relationship between people and place outlined in his essay “The Spirit of Place.” The Aborigines in Australia are the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

people of this “particular locality” (*SCAL*, 17:18). Their “presence” is, therefore, strange and separate in the eyes of the impliedly English narrator.

The theorising of racial difference was important to Lawrence. In the earlier 1918-19 version of the essay, Lawrence, even before experiencing a country outside Europe, wrote that in order to discern the distinctive voice of American literature “we must learn to think of difference and otherness” and that “we must get clear of our old oneness that imprisons our real divergence” (*SCAL*, 168: 11-12, 27-28). This theorising of the other is more commonly attributed to Edward Said and his late twentieth-century postcolonial criticism outlined in *Orientalism*. Unlike Said, however, who challenges the West’s historical assumptions and generalisations which promoted an oppositional Orient and “a code by which Europe could interpret both itself and the Orient itself,”<sup>20</sup> Lawrence sees otherness more as a parallel than as an opposition to modern western culture. Other races are not simply exotic projections. Although (in Lawrence’s mind) necessarily separate, they may potentially rehabilitate ailing western culture. This does not mean that Lawrence is immune to assertions of Western chauvinism, or fears of a degenerate other, but that he is less locked into “the binary typology of advanced and backward” which Said sees as stemming from “second-order Darwinism.”<sup>21</sup> This is consistent with Lawrence’s stated opposition to Darwinism. Amit Chaudhuri, drawing on Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature*, which begins with “The Spirit of Place,” sees Lawrence’s engagement with other cultures as embracing redemption, and as stemming from his fascination with cultures which have existed in the past:

For Lawrence, the past is a series of lost languages and differences homogenised by a powerful, monolithic, imperial race (Roman or American); not nostalgia for unity, but a constant awareness of silences and differences [which] is redemptive for Lawrence. In Lawrence, the romance of lost unity is replaced by the romance of lost difference, and we must read his works in this context.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 253.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>22</sup> Amit Chaudhuri, *D. H. Lawrence and “Difference”* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 133.

It is Chaudhuri's "lost difference" which is evident in Lawrence's construction of Aboriginal blood consciousness. In addition to the "romance" identified by Chaudhuri, however, I suggest that Lawrence's engagement with other cultures is also well grounded in a pragmatic reality. We must recall his attack on the sentimentality of anthropologists. And in one of his Melville essays, while Lawrence writes: "We can't go back" (*SCAL*, 127:14), he urges that we should "make a great swerve in our onward-going life-course now, to gather up again the savage mysteries" (*SCAL*, 127:4-5). Lawrence's evocation of an Aboriginal presence in *Kangaroo*, therefore, is not romance, but an attempt to render a more complete account of the life of the Australian continent, and its potential impact on the protagonist, Somers. Somers eventually loses his fear of the aboriginal bush, realising the entire continent is suffused with Aboriginality. In this oblique way, the novel challenges contemporary assumptions about British hegemony, well before Said's postcolonial theorising. Aboriginal "darkness" is the essential yet unsettling ingredient in Lawrence's evocation of Australianness in *Kangaroo*. Thus, in an urban context: "There was the vast town of Sydney" which "didn't seem real" and "seemed to be sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated" (*K*, 13:29-30). The narrator relates that in Sydney Harbour "the low, coffee-brown cliffs[...]looked as silent and as aboriginal as if white men had never come" (*K*, 60:9-10). This recurring motif of darkness in the novel emphasises the recentness and intrusiveness of the British occupation of Australia. The effect is to challenge British colonial purpose through a continuing and disruptive Aboriginal presence, which is every bit as powerful as if it were achieved through an actual Aboriginal character, perhaps more so. The Aboriginal presence in *Kangaroo* is also an illustration of what Chaudhuri rightly points to as an overarching tension in Lawrence: "That dimension of conflict fundamental to Lawrence: that of 'Englishness' and 'cultural difference.'"<sup>23</sup> We may conclude, therefore, that the oppositional Aboriginal presence in *Kangaroo* is part of the challenge to Somers's Englishness presented by Australia.

### *Seeing Australia*

In *Kangaroo* we find Somers struggling to both maintain his Englishness and be receptive to his new environment. Viewing the Australian landscape from a train window, Somers is

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<sup>23</sup> Chaudhuri, *D. H. Lawrence and "Difference,"* p. 139.

both repelled and attracted by the sense that he is viewing an ancient landscape which he can not fully perceive:

And all this hoary space of bush between. The strange, as it were, *invisible* beauty of Australia, which is undeniably there, but which seems to lurk just beyond the range of our white vision. You feel you can't *see* – as if your eyes hadn't the vision in them to correspond with the outside landscape. For the landscape is so unimpressive, like a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken, and it hangs back so aloof. Somers always felt he looked at it through a cleft in the atmosphere; as one looks at one of the ugly faced, distorted aborigines with his wonderful dark eyes that have such an incomprehensible ancient shine in them, across gulfs of unbridged centuries. And yet, when you don't have the feeling of ugliness or monotony, in landscape or in nigger, you get a sense of subtle, remote, *formless* beauty more poignant than anything ever experienced before. (*K*, 77: 1-14)

This is a clamorous passage. Michael Bell points to Somers's general "difficulty in assimilating the 'meaning' of Australia" and to Lawrence's assigning to the "unfamiliar qualities of the landscape" an "objective character".<sup>24</sup> So too does Roberts, who analyses part of the above passage, until "centuries," and who also rightly cites it as an example of Lawrence's seeing "the eyes of the other as objects".<sup>25</sup> If, however, we consider the final sentence in the quotation above, we see the intense struggle by the narrator to move beyond a conventional, binary, Anglocentric view of Australia: "And yet, when you don't have the feeling of ugliness or monotony, in landscape or in nigger," that is, when one learns to *see* differently, one may at least "sense" the possibility of a "*formless* beauty more poignant than anything ever experienced before." At the end of the passage, therefore, the eyes of the narrator are temporarily or at least speculatively, aligned with those of the object, in an attempt to eliminate the otherness. This opens the way for an entirely new sensibility on the part of Somers. While at this point in the novel he sees the landscape as "out of our

<sup>24</sup> Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language into Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 159.

<sup>25</sup> Roberts, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference*, p. 70.

ken" (*K*, 77:6-7), by the end he "loved" it (*K*, 346:28). It is also important not to be distracted by the narratorial use of the word "nigger," in the final sentence, which can be hugely derogatory, but which Lawrence deploys as a neutral descriptor, rather than in the deeply ambivalent sense used by, for example, Conrad in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1898).<sup>26</sup> Later, reviewing Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926), Lawrence begins matter-of-factly: "Nigger Heaven is one of the negro names for Harlem" (*P*, 361), indicating that he saw that the word was beginning to be claimed by black Americans as their own.

As *Kangaroo* develops, and Somers and Harriett are comfortably settled in their seaside house, Somers speculates about the nature of an Australian race: "It seemed to Somers that the people of Australia *ought* to be dusky" (*K*, 102:9). He is referring to British Australians here. Why has there not been a greater intermingling, a hybridising of the British and the Aboriginal races? Somers is implying. Later, he decides after his meeting with Willie Struthers that he has encountered "a distinct Australian type" (*K*, 193:22), with "dark, glancing eyes, like an aboriginal's" (*K*, 313:29). Struthers represents the possibility that Australians may well be on the road to being "dusky" after all.

### *Aborigines in Kangaroo*

While Lawrence did not meet Aborigines during his visit to Australia, it is significant that he engaged Aborigines vicariously through his reproduction of two articles from the *Bulletin* in the chapter "Bits." Neil Roberts is dismissive of these articles, making only passing reference to a single ironic "archly related anecdote from the Sydney *Bulletin*."<sup>27</sup> The *Bulletin* was a source of great stimulus for Lawrence. He reproduces half a dozen or so excerpts from the *Bulletin* in *Kangaroo*. The narrator reports that all of the *Bulletin* extracts are "not mere anecdotage. It was the momentous life of the continent" (*K*, 272:5-6). In "Bits" we learn that Somers, and we may infer Lawrence, held the *Bulletin* in high regard. It was "the only periodical in the world that really amused him. [...] He liked its straightforwardness and the kick in some of its tantrums. It beat no solemn drums" (*K*, 269:8-15). In reproducing the *Bulletin's* Aboriginal articles Lawrence, therefore, is

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Eugene B. Redmond, "Racism, or Realism? Literary Apartheid, or Poetic License? Conrad's Burden in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*" in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* by Joseph Conrad, ed., Robert Kimbrough (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), pp. 358-368.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

unambiguously indicating that Aborigines are manifestly part of the “momentous life of the continent” of Australia. Importantly, the *Bulletin* extracts about Aborigines are contrasting. In both pieces Aborigines lose their mysterious, other quality which is suggested elsewhere in the novel. Rather we find them portrayed as modern day humans. The first piece, while undoubtedly patronising, is also quirky and sardonic. And the apparent absurdity of a battered Aboriginal wife going in hard against her relatives who come to her assistance seems to suggest that for the narrator – and Lawrence, there is something more deeply human in this strange ritual of assault and counter assault – that it is a healthy and legitimate blood-letting which relieves the universal and inevitable tension in domestic relations, which he experienced in his own marriage:

Hearing the deuce of a racket in the abo (aborigines) camp near our place, we strolled over to see what was wrong, and saw a young Binghi giving his gin a father of a hiding for making eyes at another buck. Every respectable Binghi has the right to wallop his missis, but this one laid it on so much that he knocked her senseless. This enraged her relatives, and they went for him *en masse*, while two or three gins applied restoratives to the battered wife. She soon came round, and, seeing how things were, grabbed a waddy and went to the assistance of her lord and master. In the end the twain routed the phalanxed relations. Some old woman, whatever her hue! (*K*, 270:1-10)

Despite its vaudevillian tone, the article gives back-handed praise to the Aboriginal “old woman,” who in spite of her “hue,” displays commendable spirit. Lawrence’s own marriage was attended by violent outbursts, and this piece of apparently healthy Aboriginal clearing of the air, seems to endorse an honest physicality in the settling of domestic disputes, in marked contrast to the stubborn and relentless intellectualised marriage conflict which is portrayed in the chapter “Harriett and Lovatt at Sea in Marriage.” And Lawrence may well have enjoyed the Aboriginal woman running to the assistance of her “lord and master.” He uses the same term in the marriage chapter, where the narrator laments, with self-deprecating irony, that the notion “is now rather out of date” (*K*, 169:7-8).

The power of the second extract from the *Bulletin*, despite the narrator’s observation that the journal “beat no solemn drums,” is that it lauds the Aboriginal protagonist’s ability to out-wit the greed of the wider community of white British Australians. It is also a report

of the adaptation and triumph of an Aboriginal person in Australia, and a reversal of the contemporary assumption of white dominance:

I knew another case of a white girl marrying an aboriginal about 20 years ago on the Northern Rivers (N.S.W.). She was rather pretty, a descendant of an English family. Binghi was a landed proprietor, having acquired a very decent estate on the death of a former spinster employer. (Binghi must have had 'a way wid 'im'). He owned a large, well-furnished house, did himself well, had a fair education, and was a good rough-rider. But every year the 'call of the wild' came to him, and he would leave his wife and kids (they had three) and take himself to an old tumble-down hut in the bush, and there for a month or two live in solitude on his natural tucker. Under the will of the aforesaid spinster, upon Binghi's demise the estate was to revert to her relatives. With an optimism that was not without a pathos of its own, they used to trot out every outlaw in the district for their dusky friend to ride; but his neck was still in tact when I left. (*K*, 271:15-28)

Importantly, this piece also shows the novel to be cautiously reporting favourably, or at least not unfavourably, on miscegenation, and the mixed race "kids" are an example of Somers's observation that Australians should be "dusky" noted earlier. The marriage between English and Aboriginal in the above passage recalls the possibility, unrealised, of a similar union between Dr. Alexander Graham and Alvina Houghton portrayed in *The Lost Girl*. And it is the English settlers who are subjected to ridicule, not the Aboriginal man. The other notable feature of this passage is its reference to the Aborigine leaving his family and disappearing into the bush to live his traditional life. There is no irony here, and it would appear that Lawrence's other purpose in reporting this passage is to show that the Aborigine's annual sojourn in the bush may be seen as an exemplary, spiritually regenerative quest. This is in stark contrast to the avaricious scheming of his former employer's relatives. The temporary absence of the Aborigine from his family represents a healing and natural organicism in marital relations, which is, for example, a far cry from Aaron Sisson's dramatic and irreversible flight from his family in *Aaron's Rod*.

In the context of the novel as a whole, Lawrence overturns the *Bulletin's* primary purpose in reproducing the above Aboriginal passages. The *Bulletin* seeks to entertain the



reader through the perpetuation of stereotypical or sensational behaviour by Aborigines. With their appearance in *Kangaroo*, however, the *Bulletin* pieces are “re-written” by Lawrence in the same way that he re-writes Biblical, scientific and political texts. They thereby acquire new meaning. The Aboriginal subjects in the *Bulletin* are transformed into quasi Lawrentian characters in *Kangaroo*, and come close to presenting an Aboriginal point of view.

### *THE BOY IN THE BUSH*

In *The Boy in the Bush*, Lawrence continues and refines his engagement with Australian Aborigines which he established in *Kangaroo* and “Kangaroo,” but Jack Grant’s experience of Australia is, in important respects, the reverse of Richard Somers’s in *Kangaroo*. Somers, although a potential migrant, leaves Australia at the conclusion of the novel, deeply disillusioned. He can not abide the transplanted British culture nor submit to the appeal of the landscape. By contrast, in *The Boy*, Jack Grant remains in Australia at the end of the novel, and consolidates his migration to Australia, undergoing a series of regenerative transformations along the way. His experience of Australia regenerates his Englishness, turns him into an improved specimen of Englishman, who ultimately strives for a community of similarly regenerated individuals in the north-west. Like Somers, however, Grant’s sense of Englishness is at the heart of his identity. He is equally contemptuous of British Australian colonial society. Part of Grant’s regenerative quest is that he develops a kinship with Aborigines, rather than simply an awareness of their presence, felt by Somers. An important part of the novel’s critique of colonial society is its positive evocation of Australian Aborigines. Its avoidance of sentimentality, patronising, and racism, is noteworthy. There are two broad elements in *The Boy*’s engagement with Aborigines. First, in addition to maintaining the association of the Australian landscape with Aborigines presented in *Kangaroo*, *The Boy* contains active Aboriginal characters, a major extension of the “reportage” of Aboriginal life in the earlier novel. Second, inspired by his reading of Frazer, Lawrence aligns Jack’s regenerated Englishness with an esoteric but pervasive Aboriginal spirituality. The novel, however, does not present anthropological “facts,” or attempt to reproduce customs or rituals. Rather Jack identifies with a potent Aboriginal consciousness, which is largely beyond Somers’s vision in *Kangaroo*.

*Aborigines in the Bush*

*The Boy in the Bush* asserts racial difference between English and Aborigine from the beginning. Jack Grant is introduced as an English youth who has been “sent out of England,” and is a “good-looking boy[...]with dark blue eyes” (*BB*, 7:5-6). He soon meets Mary who has “big, queer, very black eyes” and the narrator indicates that “you might have thought she had native blood” (*BB*, 30:34-35). Her racial ambiguity recalls that of Dr Graham in *The Lost Girl* and Struthers in *Kangaroo*. These “dusky” characters are apparently English Australians in whom an Australian “darkness” is also discernible, and whose duskiness might be either racial, environmental or both. Jack soon learns that Aborigines, including those with mixed blood, participate in the settler life of colonial Western Australia. On his way to Wandoo, nearing Mahogany Creek, he hears of the preparations for his arrival: “Pa catches rooster, black girl blows fire,” explains Mr George (*BB*, 45:12-13). Once at Wandoo, he finds Aborigines part of the strange serenity of Australian farm life:

He walked with his hands in the pockets of his old English tweeds, feeling over-dressed and a bit out of place. Cows were tethered to posts or standing loose about the fenced yard, and the half-cast Tim, and Lennie, the dumb-bells boy, and a girl, were silently milking. The heavy, pure silence of the Australian morning. (*BB*, 52:6-10)

Although there is a racial binary apparent in the contrast between Jack’s “old English tweeds” and the Australian farm with its “half-cast,” the narrator does not assert a racial hierarchy. Tim performs the same work on the farm as the Australians. It is Jack who is “out of place,” not the “half-caste Tim.” This is a subtle portrayal of inter-racial harmony, notable for its matter-of-fact acceptance of Aboriginal involvement in the life of an Australian family farm. Similarly, at the New Year’s Eve dance at Wandoo, races mix freely and Jack finds that “a half-caste Huck was sliding a bow up and down a yellow looking fiddle, while other musicians stood with their instruments under their arms” (*BB*, 123:20-22). It is at the dance, however, that Jack encounters the possibility of intimacy with a part-Aboriginal woman, Lily, and here the novel, and I suggest Lawrence, struggles to reconcile the dignity with which it has thus far accorded relations between races, with a

countervailing need to set a limit to these relations – namely, miscegenation. It is at this point that Lawrence struggles with his “parallel” view of Aborigines, outlined earlier, and sees Australian Aboriginality as oppositional, in contrast to a perceived norm of whiteness, or Englishness/Britishness/Australianness. Through Lily, the novel directly engages degenerationist and Lawrentian anxieties about sexual relations between Europeans and non-Europeans. By 1923, after his arrival in America, and with an interracial romance depicted in “Quetzalcoatl,” Lawrence was retreating from his 1910 certainty and smugness about white racial superiority. But he abandoned *Quetzalcoatl* to commence work on *The Boy*,<sup>28</sup> and in the chapter on the New Year’s Eve celebrations at Wandoo, there is a sense in *The Boy* that Lawrence is still painfully crafting his position on race almost as he writes. At the dance, the atmosphere is highly sexualised. There is a game of “Modern Proposals,” where “the Bushies were at heart terrified lest they might by accident contract a Scotch marriage, and be held accountable for it” (*BB*, 129:6, 25-26). Jack is in charge of this game in which Lily, a part-Aboriginal woman comes forward for her turn:

The next girl had been looming up like a big coal barge. She was a half-caste, of course named Lily, and she sat aggressively forwards, her bony elbows and wrists much in evidence, and her pleasant swarthy face alight and eager with anticipation. Oh these Missioner half-castes! (*BB*, 130:6-10)

The “of course” mocks the absurd incongruity of the whiteness associated with Lily’s name. She is “aggressive.” The label “Missioner,” refers to the Aboriginal missions, and stigmatises her as an inhabitant of a twilight space which is the domain of neither traditional Aboriginal nor colonial white. This implied racial degeneracy underpins her implied moral degeneracy. The exclamation mark at the conclusion of the quotation suggests that she is, variously, behaving presumptuously and beyond her station, is licentious, or at best absurd. The only complimentary thing about Lily is that her face is “pleasant,” but even here she is also “swarthy.” Jack is pleased that the game has resulted in his enemy, the Australian colonial Easu, being paired with Lily. Jack assumes that this will humiliate Easu in front of the crowd. But Easu trumps Jack, by making his own publicly lewd proposal to Lily:

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<sup>28</sup> Louis L. Martz, “Introduction,” *Quetzalcoatl* by D. H. Lawrence (New York: New Directions Books, 1998), p. xi.

Jack ordered Easu forward.

But Easu was not to be baited. He strode over, put his hand on the fuzzy head, and said in a strong voice:

‘Hump y’r bluey and come home.’

The laugh was with him, he had won again. (*BB*, 130:11-15)

Easu deftly deflects any sniggering over a possible Scotch marriage with Lily by brazenly walking out the door with her. The novel does not report Lily’s feelings. She is simply his conquest and has the status of “a sort of concubine” who “would give him all the submission he wanted” (*BB*, 131:16-17). Lily provides an example of Hugh Stevens’s general proposition that “Lawrence strikingly blends eroticism and racial markings.”<sup>29</sup>

Importantly, however, the pairing of Easu and Lily also represents a new Australian sexuality challenging Jack’s “English tweeds” sexuality. Should he explore such a union, or resist with all his might? The liaison between Easu and Lily challenges contemporary (and Lawrence’s) notions of racial boundaries. The novel also subtly exposes the results of interracial unions, since these produce mixed race off-spring such as Lily herself. The overarching question posed by the novel is whether interracial unions and their consequences are degenerative or regenerative. In so doing it is aligned with wider contemporary racial theorising. Race theory was not unified on this topic and was complicated by the idea (and evidence) that some races supplanted others in what was often couched as a Social Darwinian struggle for survival. In the Australian context, Darwin himself, as I noted in chapter 1, believed that the British would displace the Aboriginal population, thereby pointing to racial extinction. After World War I, there was concern in Australia, as Russell McGregor observes, about a half-caste “problem,” because part-Aboriginal people were reproducing faster than whites.<sup>30</sup> Importantly, in view of Lawrence’s regenerative quest, McGregor alerts us to, not only “absorptionist” policies of the 1930s intended to make Aborigines “indistinguishable from white Australians,”<sup>31</sup> but also to a peculiar and paradoxical union of eugenics and race theory, based on an obscure

<sup>29</sup> Stevens, “Sex and Nation,” p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Russell McGregor, “Breed Out the Colour: Reproductive Management for White Australia,” in *A Race for Place: Eugenics, Darwinism and Social Thought and Practice in Australia. Proceedings of the History and Sociology of Eugenics Conference*, University of Newcastle, 27-29 April 2000, eds., Martin Crotty, John Germov and Grant Rodwell (Callaghan: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 2000), p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

idea of racial relatedness, which advocated what we might call the plundering of Aboriginal genetic stock for the regeneration of Europeans. McGregor observes that:

The weight of eugenic opinion in English-speaking countries was against the mixing of supposedly widely disparate races (such as black and white), but even on this issue absorptionism had a saving clause in the theory of Aboriginal-Caucasian race relatedness.<sup>32</sup>

He notes that mixed Aboriginal and European Australians would, according to some observers of the time, such as Cecil Cook, “serve to reduce the at present high incidence of skin cancer in the blonde European.”<sup>33</sup> While I have already argued that Lawrence firmly rejected eugenics, we might recall Somers’s speculation in *Kangaroo* that “the people of Australia *ought* to be dusky” (*K*, 102:8-9), in order to see how close Lawrence comes to wider theories of race relations and race regeneration. In *The Boy*, therefore, Easu and Lily might themselves produce the “dusky” Australians Somers expects to have found in *Kangaroo*.

Through Lily, *The Boy* also reinforces the inseparability of the Australian continent from its indigenous inhabitants established in *Kangaroo*. While Jack gets a breath of air outside the dance, he acknowledges that, fundamentally, Australia still belongs to the Aborigines:

The night seemed full of low, half-mysterious talking, in a starry darkness that seemed pregnant with the scent and presence of the black people. Jack often wondered why, in the night, the country still seemed to belong to the black people, with their strange, big liquid eyes. (*BB*, 130:8-12)

In the face of Easu’s coloniality and Lily’s Aboriginality, Jack’s Englishness functions as a kind of third race in the novel. However, while Jack and Easu are implacable enemies, they share a love interest with an Australian woman, Monica, which complicates the novel’s English/Australian polarity. Monica has been most attentive to Jack at the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>33</sup> Cecil Cook in Ibid., p. 63.

dance with “her fingers twining into his as if she were entering into his body” (*BB*, 130:31-32), but outside in the night, Jack wonders: “Where was Easu? Was he talking to Monica? Or to the black half-caste Lily? It might as well be the one as the other” (*BB*, 131:13-14). This speculation sets off a terrible race anxiety in Jack:

But then why Monica? Monica in her white, full skirted frock with its moulded bodice, her slender, golden-white arms and throat! Why Monica in the same class with the half-caste Lily? (*BB*, 131:18-20)

This is far more than simple rivalry and “anger against Easu” (*BB*, 131:21). Jack’s fear is that Monica is being racially compromised by Easu. It is her whiteness which is under threat from Easu through his association with the blackness of Lily. The deeper question for Jack, however, is whether these Australian behaviours are something he should engage in, or resist. Should he accept the easy virtue of Monica as an example of a new Australian morality? Should he be repelled by Monica, as he is by Easu? These racially-based anxieties cause him to evaluate the wider colonial Australian environment, and again the novel asks whether Australia is degenerate or regenerate, whether the Australian colonial society exhibits new social freedoms or a loss of social control:

He listened to the Australian voices and the Australian accent around him. The careless, slovenly speech in the uncontrolled, slack, caressive voices. At first he had thought the accent awful. And it *was* awful. But gradually, as he got into the rhythm of the people, he began even to sympathise with “Kytie” instead of “Katie.” There was an abandon in it all—an abandon of restrictions and confining control. Why have control? Why have authority? Why not let everybody do as they liked? Why not?

That was what Australia was for—a careless freedom. An easy, unrestricted freedom. At least out in the bush. Every man to do as he liked. Easu to run around with Monica, or with the black Lily, or to kick Jack’s shins in the dance. (*BB*, 131:22-34)

At first Jack finds the Australian accent “slovenly.” It is a corrupted form of correct English. He speculates that in time, he might adapt to this and to aspects of the new

morality he discerns in Australia. The crisis point, however, is that he might personally be implicated in miscegenation, which he can not abide. Jack

did not mind Easu's running with a black girl, and afterwards with Monica. Morally he did not mind it. But physically—perhaps pride of race—he minded. Physically he could never go so far as to lay his hand on the darky's fuzzy head. His pride of blood was too intense. He had no objection at all to Lily, until it came to actual physical contact. And then his blood recoiled with old haughtiness and pride of race. It was bad enough to have to come into contact with a woman of his own race: to have to give himself away even so far. The other was impossible. (*BB*, 132:3-11)

While Jack “had no objection at all to Lily,” he asserts “pride of race” and the primacy of essential race difference, as a reason to oppose miscegenation. It is this aspect of *The Boy in the Bush* which reveals Lawrence's intense struggle with miscegenation, which is also apparent in the abandoned *Quetzalcoatl*. In *Quetzalcoatl* the Anglo-Irish Kate Burns, explaining her inability to marry the Mexican Indian Cipriano, tells him: “This is too far. The change is too great. I can't make it. I can't change my race. And I can't betray my blood” (*Q*, 318). This is strikingly similar to the language Lawrence uses in the passage above where Jack feels that “his blood recoiled with old haughtiness and pride of race,” and that he is unable “to give himself away even so far.” Jack's English separateness, the novel asserts, must be preserved. Easu and Monica's casual acceptance of inter-racial relations is, by contrast, degenerate. While the Australian “Monica wouldn't really mind about the black girl” (*BB*, 131:36-38), Jack is deeply troubled. Jack's rejection of Lily, therefore, and Easu's eventual death in his duel with Jack, signals the novel's killing off of interracial unions. And Jack's winning of Monica from Easu, represents her rescue from one tainted with such a union. While both Jack and Easu have complicated and multiple sexual relations and each has a relationship with Monica, the novel's morality hinges on race rather than sex. Easu's interracial union, like his Australian accent, and his aggression, is degenerate. And, although Lawrence, as I have argued, persistently associates Australian Aborigines with the spirit of Australia, in *The Boy*, he is unwilling to physically link his English protagonist with that spirit. The regeneration of Jack's Englishness does not,

therefore, occur through his marriage and physical contact with an Aboriginal Australian. Rather it occurs through his sense of kinship with Aborigines and their spirituality. Kinship asserts the maintenance of two separate racial strands, rather than a union or intertwining.

*English Kinship with Aborigines*

Jack feels a “kinship” with Aborigines based on a shared understanding of the primacy of the senses over the mind:

It was the anger, the deep, burning *life-anger* which was the kinship. Not a deathly, pale, nervous anger. But an anger of the old blood. And it was this which had attracted him to grooms, horsey surroundings, and to pugilists. In them was some of the same deep, generous anger of the blood. And now in Australia too, he saw it like a secret away at the bottom of the black, full, strangely shining eyes of the aborigines. There it lay, the secret, like an eternal, brilliant snake. And it established at once a kind of free-masonry between him and the blacks. They were cautiously aware of him, when he came: aware of his coming, aware of his going. As if in him were the same Great Serpent of their anger. (BB, 193:38-40, 194:1-8)

Importantly, Jack is not really *like* Aborigines. It is only “*as if* the same Great Serpent” (my italics) of the Aborigines inhabited him. Jack enjoys a kind of brotherhood, a “free-masonry” with “the blacks,” but there is not an actual flow, as it were, of consciousness from the Aborigines to Jack. There is only a kind of mutuality – the shared “anger of the old blood” and an awareness. The two races remain separate. Importantly, the strength of the bond is biased in Jack’s favour. It is his English energy which is the more vital. It is the Aborigines at Wandoo who will suffer as a result of his departure with Tom on their great adventure:

And they were downcast now he was going away, as if their strength were being taken from them. Old Tim, who had taken a great fancy to Jack, relapsed into a sort of glumness as if he too, now, were preparing to die. (BB, 194:8-10)



It is during Jack's journey with Tom that he discovers what we might call his own proud "essential English aboriginality." At an Australian bush wedding, in the company of his Australian mate Tom Ellis, fuelled by alcohol and sexual conquest, Jack experiences a rite of passage from which he emerges with an overwhelming and exaggerated belief in his integrity and superiority as an English or British man – Lawrence conflates the two. Jack finds a group of men– English, Scots, Irish and Welsh having a dancing competition "dancing a jig or a horn-pipe," and Jack is overcome with English patriotism (*BB*, 205:29; 206:4). And then follows one of the most remarkable passages in the novel:

‘I am an Englishman,’ he thought, with savage pride. “I am an Englishman. That is the best on earth. Australia is English, English, English, she’d collapse like a balloon but for the English in her. British means English first. I’m a Britisher, but I’m an Englishman. God! God! I’m an Englishman. It means the best on earth. The best on earth. What are women to me, when I’m an Englishman! God! I could crumple the universe in my fist, I could. I’m an Englishman, and I could crush everything in my hand. And the women are left behind. I’m an Englishman.’ (*BB*, 206:5-13)

This astonishingly chauvinistic moment in the novel, in which Englishness is asserted over other forms of Britishness, throws Jack's aversion to interracial intimacy with Lily into a sharper perspective. It makes clear that, whatever happens to Jack in Australia he must remain purely English, and superior. Significantly, for Jack, "Australia is English," and therefore his awakened Englishness may, indeed must, be asserted in Australia. It is English men such as Jack who will prevent Australia from "collapsing like a balloon." What Australia needs is continuing infusions of high quality English men to stop it going under. The narrator informs us that Jack "had decided something at the jamboree. He belonged to the blood of masters, not of servants" (*BB*, 209:1-2). As a consequence, Jack's relationship with his Australian companion Tom is changed. Jack is now in command, and the following day feeling "that old call in the blood which made him master of Tom" he orders the hung-over Tom to get his gear ready for departure (*BB*, 208: 21-22). Daniel Pick observes that in the context of English racial anxiety around the *fin de siècle*

there was an “attempt to construct a racial-imperial identity,” and that “‘Englishness’” had to be defined in a double movement of inclusion and exclusion, ideological assimilation and expulsion.”<sup>34</sup> In *The Boy*, Lawrence performs this “double movement” in the 1920s. Tom, therefore, although in one sense “English,” is an inferior colonial specimen, and is differentiated as “other” in relation to Jack’s superior Englishness. Jack’s quest for a regenerated Englishness contrasts with the earlier enfeebled Englishness evoked through his recollection of his English father “the General” whom he remembers as “a little fantastic, like the policeman in a punch-and-Judy show” (*BB*, 11:11,17-18).

The challenge for Jack is to tap into the positive forces in Australia and avoid the negative. Unlike England with its “strong central pivot to all the living,” Jack feels that in Australia “the centre-pin was gone” (*BB*, 215:20-21). He wonders: “What did it all mean?” (*BB*, 216:4). As a result of his regenerative wedding feast experience, he sees that “everybody” is “dancing a crazy dance of death,” that “death” is “the great end and goal” (*BB*, 216:6-7, 18). Significantly, however, the Australian Aborigines are an analogue to Jack’s new consciousness since they do not simply acknowledge death but embrace death and celebrate it:

He could understand that the blacks painted themselves like white bone skeletons, and danced in the night like skeletons dancing, in their corroborees. That was how it was. The night, dark and fleshly, and skeletons dancing a clicketty dry dance in it. (*BB*, 216:7-11)

There is an echo of Harrison’s anthropology here. Just as in *Ancient Art and Ritual*, where Harrison wrote that in the kangaroo dance, the men “were kangaroos,”<sup>35</sup> so too the Aborigines in the above passage *are* the “skeletons dancing” – and are not a mere representation. The Aborigine experiences death in the dance. And so Jack begins to understand some of the Aborigines’ consciousness of the imminence of death:

Something of the black aboriginal horror came over him. He realised, to his amazement, the actuality of the great, grinning, black demon of death.

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<sup>34</sup> Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 215.

<sup>35</sup> Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, p. 46.

The vast infinite demon that eats our flesh and cracks our bones in the last black potency of the end. [ ...]

[...]Satan, Moloch, Death itself, all had been unreal to him before. But now, suddenly, he seemed to see the black Moloch grinning huge in the sky[...].

(*BB*, 216: 25-28, 35-37)

Holly Laird observes that in regard to his poems in *Birds Beasts and Flowers* “for Lawrence, the search for a new language was one and the same as the search for a new world with new heroes in it.”<sup>36</sup> Laird’s observation may be applied more widely and this is amply illustrated in one of Lawrence’s most idiosyncratic and nebulous concepts – the “Lord of Death,” which is deeply infused with Lawrence’s construction of a dark Australian Aboriginal spirituality:

‘I am going my way the same,’ Jack thought to himself. “I am travelling in a reckless, slow dance, darker and darker, into the black, hot belly of death, where is my end. Oh, let me go gallantly, let me have the black joy of the road. Let me go with courage and a bit of splendour and dark lustre, down to the great depths of death, that I am so frightened of, but which I long for in the last consummation. Let death take me in a last black embrace. Let me go on as the niggers go, with the last convulsion into the last black embrace. Since I am travelling the dark road, let me go in pride. Let me be a Lord of Death, since the reign of the white Lords of Life, like my father, has become sterile and a futility. Let me be a Lord of Death. Let me go that other great road, that the blacks go.–’ (*BB*, 217:6-17).

The barren “white Lords of Life” include not only Lawrence’s father, but by extension, the supreme western European father, Christ. As “a Lord of Death,” Jack stands directly opposed, not only to prevailing conventions found in England and its colony in Western Australia, but the whole of Christendom. And it is as a Lord of Death that Jack assimilates some of the attributes of Australian Aborigines. As with his re-workings of the Bible,

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<sup>36</sup> Holly Laird, “‘Homunculus Stirs:’ Masculinity and the Mock-Heroic in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*,” in *Lawrence and Comedy*, eds., Paul Eggert and John Worthen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 115.

Lawrence reworks conventional anthropology and displaces the negative connotation of savagery found in the “darkness” of Frazer’s introduction to *Totemism and Exogamy*. Whereas Frazer sees his task as anthropologist is to “break the dream” and “to dispel the mirage,” of “savagery” before its inevitable demise,<sup>37</sup> Lawrence’s purpose is to embrace and re-cast the concept of savagery as an example for modern humanity. Lawrence’s idiosyncratic and nebulous Lord of Death may have loose origins in one of the accounts of supernatural beings found in Frazer, that of an Aboriginal magician “Daramulun.” Frazer reports:

He can be invisible; but when he makes himself visible, it is in the form of an old man of the Australian race. He is evidently everlasting, for he has existed from the beginning of things, and he still lives. But in being so he is merely in that state in which, these aborigines believe, every one would be, if not prematurely killed by evil magic. [...]In this being, though supernatural, there is no trace of a divine nature. All that can be said of him is that he is imagined as the ideal of those qualities which are, according to their standard, virtues worthy of being imitated. Such would be a man who is skilful in the use of weapons of offence and defence, all-powerful in magic, but generous and liberal to his people, who does no injury or violence to any one, yet treats with severity any breaches of custom or morality.<sup>38</sup>

It is through Jack’s aspiration to be a Lord of Death, his awareness of a latent savagery in himself, that he is revived. He “could think now[...]of fighting Easu” and “raising fine horses” (*BB*, 218:4-5). He must “have a woman” and “have her children” as well as “other women in the background” (*BB*, 218:9-10). And he must “fight the men that stand in one’s way” (*BB*, 218:12), and if necessary “die a violent death” (*BB*, 218:21). If we consider Jack’s defeat of the degenerate Easu, Jack is like Daramulun in Frazer, who while he is “generous and liberal to people[...]treats with severity any breaches of custom or morality.” Through Jack’s new understanding of “the black aboriginal horror” (*BB*,

<sup>37</sup> Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, p. xv.

<sup>38</sup> A. W. Howitt in Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, p. 145.

216:25), his English spirituality is regenerated. He embraces the “grinning black demon of death” and “the last black potency of the end” (*BB*, 216: 26-28).

Fiona Becket remarks that Lawrence is overwhelmingly concerned with “birth and re-birth of the self,” and that he “locates the birth of consciousness[...]in the blood,” characterising it as “non-cerebral.”<sup>39</sup> This concern of Lawrence’s is graphically illustrated in *The Boy in the Bush*. Jack, in defeating Easu asserts his blood-consciousness over the mentalised consciousness of Easu. In the climactic duel-like encounter, Jack shoots into “the mystic place in Easu’s forehead,” a potent symbol of “the ultimate level of consciousness and power” (*BB*, 281:21), which is embraced in yoga traditions (*BB*, 425). Jack’s destruction of Easu’s mental consciousness is reinforced by the graphic allusion to the dog’s licking “his scattered brains” after his death (*BB*, 282:6-7). Thus Jack’s destruction of Easu signals his regeneration as Lord of Death. He is left wandering and dazed, lost in the bush, and converses with his horse: “I like to be lord of Death. Who do they call the Lords of Death. I am a Lord of Death” (*BB*, 284: 16-17). As he stumbles he divests himself of his clothes, the outward signs of English civilisation: “He stopped, took off his braces and threw them away, then his sweat-soaked undervest” (*BB*, 288:9-10). But he stops short of removing his trousers. In the last resort, he retains his Englishness, albeit fortified with blackness and blood consciousness. Jack must not turn savage, degenerate, like Conrad’s Kurtz. He says to himself: “‘Don’t be a fool, and throw away your clothes, man. You know men do it who are lost in the bush, and then they are found naked, dead’” (*BB*, 288:14-16). The narrator reports that while “he wanted to go over the border[...]something deeper even than his consciousness refused” (*BB*, 288:29-30). His refusal is based on his regenerated Englishness. “It had something to do with birth. And not having died,” we are informed (*BB*, 291:5-6). It is through “boy’s eyes” that Jack, parched with thirst, first becomes aware that Tom has rescued him, but as he comes around to full awareness Jack realises that through his ordeal with Easu and his trials in the bush, he has been “dark-anointed and sent back” by his Lord[...]the Lord of Death” (*BB*, 291:23; 292: 8-9, 7-8).

### *The Limits of Kinship with Aborigines*

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<sup>39</sup> Becket, “Lawrence and Psychoanalysis,” p. 226.

In addition to prescribing the limits to Jack's physical relationship with Lily, the novel, in its engagement with traditional Aboriginal culture, makes it clear that Jack must not seek to emulate their way of life. He must, as I have noted, remain clothed, not "go over the border." While he and Tom ride deeper into the outback, their conversation reveals the demarcation between their quest, and the actual life and landscape of Aboriginal people:

'Fifty-seven miles to where?'

I don't know. We're leagues from Gingin. Certainly fifty-seven miles to nowhere of any importance on the face of this earth.'

'Wonder what Gingin means?'

'Better not ask. You never know what these natives 'll be naming places after. Usually something vile.—But *gin* means a woman, whatever Gingin is.' (BB, 227:6-12)

An Aboriginal place has "no importance." When the novel faces the possibility of actual contact with Aborigines in their traditional environment, a separation remains. *The Boy*, therefore, is deeply fearful of the dangers of white racial degeneration in primitive surroundings. Lawrence outlined his horror of white degeneration in his essay on Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*:

If you prostitute your psyche by returning to the savages, you gradually go to pieces. Before you can go back you *have* to decompose. And a white man decomposing is a ghastly sight. (SCAL, 128:10-13)

Again in the Melville essay Lawrence elaborates on the relation between Europeans and people from other races, stating that while one must maintain sympathy, one must remain separate:

We can't go back to the savages: not a stride. We can be in sympathy with them. We can take a great curve in their direction, onwards. But we cannot turn the current of our life backwards. [...]If we do it for a moment, it makes us sick. (SCAL, 127:22-26)

Lawrence read the proofs of the essays in *Studies* in May-June 1923 (*SCAL*, xvii), and began work on *The Boy* after receiving Mollie Skinner's manuscript two months later on 19 August 1923 (*BB*, xiii), which further illustrates the resonances between Lawrence's American and his Australian work.

In "Indians and an Englishman" written in October 1922, soon after his arrival in America (*DG*, 546), Lawrence explains his own sense of kinship with indigenous cultures:

I don't want to live again the tribal mysteries my blood has lived long since. I don't want to know as I have known, in the tribal exclusiveness. But every drop of me trembles still alive to the old sound, every thread in my body quivers to the frenzy of the old mystery. I know my derivation. [...] But I stand on the far edge of their fire light, and am neither denied nor accepted. My way is my own, old red father; I can't cluster at the drum any more. (*P*, 99)

Lawrence's position in "Indians and an Englishman" foregrounds very closely the emotional and cultural distance which Jack Grant maintains between himself and Aborigines in *The Boy*. Both the essay and the novel reflect Lawrence's horror of sentimentalising the culture of indigenous people, as well as his distrust of culturally prescribed behaviours more generally. In a later essay, Lawrence includes Aborigines as an example of humanity's universal experience of repression and constraint in society in general. To "live again the tribal mysteries" would, be simply substituting one set of strictures for another. In "The Good Man," Lawrence writes:

When Oscar Wilde said that it was nonsense to assert that art imitates nature, because nature always imitates art, this was absolutely true of human nature. The thing called "spontaneous human nature" does not exist and never did. Human nature is always made to some pattern or other. The wild Australian aborigines are absolutely bound up tight, tighter than a China-girl's foot, in their few savage conventions. They are bound up tighter than we are. But the length of the ideal bondage doesn't matter. Once you begin to feel it pressing, it'll press tighter and tighter, till either you burst it, or collapse inside it, or go deranged. And the

conventional and ideal and emotional bandage presses as tight upon the Australian black girl in her tribe. (*P*, 752)

Hence Jack Grant's regeneration in *The Boy* is achieved through absorption of a diffused Aboriginal spirituality – any greater engagement would be restrictive and negative. His becoming a Lord of Death is the manifestation and the limit of his “kinship” with Aborigines.

### *Lawrence Race and “De-colonisation”*

To the reader of the twenty-first century, Lawrence's attitude to race can appear riddled with a confused ambivalence or outright prejudice. It is useful, however, to place Lawrence in the context of the prevailing attitudes of the early twentieth century. Mark Kinkead-Weekes is right to warn against “condescending to the past” in our assessment of Lawrence's attitudes to race and, moreover, sees his late encounter with indigenous Americans as having enabled him to move beyond his times and “decolonise his vision” in the 1920s.<sup>40</sup> Kinkead-Weekes suggests that in *The Plumed Serpent*, “at least the horror of miscegenation has lapsed.”<sup>41</sup> And *The Plumed Serpent* has been described by Virginia Hyde as “a pioneer in depicting interracial marriage.”<sup>42</sup> Neither Kinkead-Weekes nor Hyde discusses the role of *The Boy* in the development of Lawrence's attitude to miscegenation, but the subject forms an important thematic link between Lawrence's American and Australian writing. Just how difficult it was for Lawrence to decolonise his vision in regard to miscegenation is evident if we examine his handling of the subject in *The Plumed Serpent*. Kate Leslie, the recreated Kate Burns of *Quetzalcoatl*, after her marriage to the Mexican Indian Cipriano, finds that “the process of change with her blood was terrible to her” (*PS*, 421:29). Suddenly she is overcome with nostalgia for “England for Christmas” (*PS*, 430:11) and the novel does not resolve Kate's feeling of duality which follows her marriage (*PS*, 429:18). Significantly, the couple does not produce children. There remains therefore, even in *The Plumed Serpent*, a lingering provisionality in Lawrence's acceptance

<sup>40</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes, “Decolonising Imagination: Lawrence in the 1920s in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>42</sup> Virginia Hyde, “Introduction,” *The Plumed Serpent*, by D. H. Lawrence, eds. L. D. Clark and Virginia Crosswhite Hyde (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. xx.



of interracial marriage. Kinkead-Weekes notes that Lawrence's initial "sudden awkwardness about miscegenation" after witnessing the relationship between his host at Taos, Mabel Dodge, and her Indian partner Tony Luhan, is the precursor to his racial concerns in his final version of *Studies of Classic American Literature*.<sup>43</sup> Lawrence's anxiety at Mabel Dodge's relationship is also, I suggest, also the precursor to Jack's attitude towards Lily in *The Boy*, which I have already discussed.

Looking more broadly than miscegenation, Lawrence's vision does appear "decolonised" when we compare his evocation of Australian Aborigines and their relations with white society with that of other writers. He certainly does not rehearse the attitudes and clichés of his day, many of which were founded on the early European accounts and representations of Aborigines. Coral Lansbury, citing nineteenth-century authors such as Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope, who argued that it was a waste of time expending effort on the presumed-to-be-doomed Aborigines observes: "Few races, unless it be the Jews, have ever suffered such literary contempt as the Australian Aborigine."<sup>44</sup> Of particular interest is the half-caste Aboriginal character Warrigal, in Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*, which as I have noted, Lawrence read and praised. J. J. Healy observes that Boldrewood's novel is

a romance of celebration, excluding, on the whole, serious tension. The disturbing element in that world was the Aborigine, who, although officially excluded from it, forced his way from the periphery of the action to the centre of the stage. Warrigal is an indigenous presence who exudes evil, who is the *deus ex machina*, again and again[...].<sup>45</sup>

Boldrewood, Healy notes, has two categories: "the sentimental faithful servant like Wildduck, and the vicious half-caste or backtracker," like Warrigal.<sup>46</sup> Here is the scene where Warrigal is introduced:

<sup>43</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, "Decolonising Imagination," p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> Carol Lansbury, *Arcady and Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970), p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> Healy, *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia*, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

With our fresh horses and riding round so we kept the cattle easily enough. We did not tell Warrigal he might go to rest, not thinking a half-caste brat like him wanted any. He didn't say anything, but went to sleep on his horse, which walked in and out amongst the cattle as he sat on his saddle with his head down on the horse's neck.<sup>47</sup>

While Jack in *The Boy*, rejects the idea of sexual relations with the part-Aboriginal Lily, and the narrator mocks her looks, neither she nor the other Aboriginal characters in *The Boy* suffer the gratuitous abuse found in the above passage. Moreover, as I have noted, Lawrence replaces Boldrewood's "evil" Aborigine, with the positive Aboriginal spirituality embodied in the Lord of Death. He thereby carefully avoids both sentimentality and viciousness in his portrayal of Aborigines.

It is also useful to consider Lawrence's evocation of Aborigines in *The Boy* in the context of Australian literature of the 1920s. The novel may be seen at least in part, as both an "Australian" work, because of its co-authorship by an Australian, and because it is a novel "about" Australia. *The Boy* is omitted entirely from *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, but interestingly *Kangaroo* sits ambiguously in the "Chronology" as an apparently quasi-Australian novel, although it is not discussed in the body of the *Companion*.<sup>48</sup> Both novels, however, contribute to a body of early twentieth-century literature which engages black and white relationships in Australia. In her essay "Fiction from 1900 to 1970" included in *The Cambridge Companion*, Kerry Goldsworthy draws attention to the increasing centrality in Australian fiction of "black/white sexual and emotional relations" from around 1923, when Catherine Martin published *The Incredible Journey*, which features an Aboriginal heroine.<sup>49</sup> Goldsworthy also notes the importance of the fiction of E. L. Grant Watson, another Englishman, for its upholding of "the values of Aboriginal culture."<sup>50</sup> Lawrence was not familiar with Martin, but I have noted the broad impact of Watson's *Where Bonds Are Loosed* on Lawrence in chapter 2, including its stimulus for *The Boy*. Watson's novel condemns the de-humanising policies and practices

<sup>47</sup> Rolf Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, eds., Paul Eggert and Elizabeth Webby, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Webby, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. xv.

<sup>49</sup> Kerry Goldsworthy, "Fiction from 1900 to 1970," in *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, ed., Elizabeth Webby, pp. 122-123.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

of Aboriginal administrators and medical authorities in Australia, and *The Boy* condemns contemporary efforts to civilise that culture. Jack and Tom discover that in the far-flung regions of the colony “all the machinery of civilisation, [was] as far as possible, starting to grind and squeak there in the beyond” and “at mission stations, [they] watched the blacks being saved” (*BB*, 232:7-9,10-11). This disdain towards assimilation of traditional Aboriginal society highlights *The Boy*’s distance from contemporary Aboriginal policies in Australia, and reflects Lawrence’s overall disdain for white do-gooders which he articulated in America after his contact with Native Americans (*DG*, 179-180).

Goldsworthy also notes the importance of K. S. Prichard’s “progressive novel” *Coonardoo* in presenting positive evocations of Aborigines.<sup>51</sup> Published in 1929, the novel recounts the ultimately doomed relationship between a black woman and a white station owner. According to Prichard herself, she was a great admirer of Lawrence’s writing, but more so his non-Australian work, and particularly *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.<sup>52</sup> The two authors corresponded for a time and Lawrence thought Katharine Throssell (née Prichard) “too feminine” in her criticism of *Kangaroo*, and thought she’d “like *Boy in the Bush* better” (*viii*. 90). It seems that she did not. Prichard dismissed as “obsessions,” the “‘blood’ superiority” of Jack Grant, and Lawrence’s “preoccupation with death, the dark gods, [and] sexual malevolence.”<sup>53</sup> It remains significant, however, that Lawrence’s exploration of race relations in *The Boy* pre-dates Prichard’s “progressive novel” by six years. Given Prichard’s general admiration of Lawrence, we may speculate that his aversion to miscegenation expressed in *The Boy* may have spurred her towards a fuller, more sympathetic, if ultimately still problematic, exploration of the subject in *Coonardoo*.

Ultimately, *The Boy* presents an unresolved contradiction in its evocation of Aboriginal presence. On the one hand, Jack, on arrival in Western Australia feels that “the air was the air of a new world, unbreathed by [presumably white] man” (*BB*, 8:2), that the bush is “a new paradise, from which man had not been cast out” (*BB*, 92:22-23) and “where man has to begin all over again” (*BB*, 94:11). Yet in the background Jack also hears “the strange slobbering talk of the blacks” (*BB*, 92:31). And as in *Kangaroo*, the bush is suffused with Aboriginality:

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<sup>51</sup> Goldsworthy, p. 123.

<sup>52</sup> Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 2 1919-1925, p. 277.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275-276).

Jack always felt queer, in York on Sundays. The attempt at Sunday seemed to him like children's make-belief. [...]It was a sort of earnest make-belief, where people felt important like actors. [...]If they didn't keep up the conviction, the dark, strange Australian night might clear them and their little town all away into some final cupboard, and leave the aboriginal bush again. (*BB*, 180:17-32)

The novel never resolves the contradiction between its rejection of colonial effort, and its colonialist assumption that the land is vacant and available for the regeneration of the English. The novel's overall utopian vision of the north-west is founded, not only on its contrast with a civilised Perth, but what in postcolonial terms, is the premise of the rightness of English colonial appropriation of that space. The novel and Lawrence need Australia to be both unpopulated, and available to Jack, as a repository of a tangible regenerative indigenous presence, and a site for community. This is the limitation Lawrence's ability to de-colonise his vision.

In *The Boy in the Bush*, nevertheless, Lawrence steps boldly, as it were, outside Somers's railway carriage in *Kangaroo*. Jack Grant, the "boy in the bush," more clearly perceives the Aboriginal spirit of Australia than does Somers. Both novels avoid contemporary stereotypical presentations of Australian Aborigines, as either dying out or inferior to Europeans. Importantly, *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* are exploratory rather than didactic, and both novels demonstrate shifts and transitions in Lawrence's vision of race relations and his attempts, albeit with trepidation, to positively incorporate racial difference into his broader regenerative quest.

9. *THE BOY IN THE BUSH: MANAGING MATRIARCHY, MASCULINITY, AND BIGAMY IN THE BUSH*

It is axiomatic that the exploration of gender relations pervades Lawrence's entire oeuvre – his fiction, essays, poetry, drama, letters, criticism, translations and paintings. This is particularly evident in his novels, all of which explore in some way the regenerative possibilities offered by marriage, or relations between couples, in the face of what he saw as the degenerative forces emanating from modern, industrial, democratic, society. At the same time, Lawrence believed in the primacy of male authority within marriage, and that there were spheres beyond marriage which man should inhabit without women. These were issues which were contested in his own marriage. In *The White Peacock* (1911) there are chapters entitled "The Courting" and "The Fascination of the Forbidden Apple." In *The Trespasser* (1912), a man disintegrates after leaving his wife and family. In the highly autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Lawrence analyses his parents' marriage, and his own early sexual relations. *The Rainbow* (1915) is in part, a family saga and begins with an Englishman marrying a Polish lady. In *Women in Love* (1921), Birkin and Gerald debate the merits of marriage in the chapter "Marriage or Not." In *The Lost Girl* (1920), Alvina has several relationships before she finds her true marriage partner. *Aaron's Rod* (1922), examines the progress of a man who leaves his marriage to save his own spirit from going under, and *Kangaroo* (1923) includes an ironic portrayal of the battle for supremacy within a marriage. *St. Mawr* (1925) portrays the collapse of a marriage between an Australian and an American. In *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), an inter-racial marriage has regenerative possibilities for a European woman. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), a paralysed marriage is jettisoned in favour of a regenerative union which transcends class and moral conventions. In Lawrence's poetry, his "Foreword" and "Argument," which introduce "Look! We Have Come Through!" (1917), through their discussions of conflict and transcendence, herald the centrality of Lawrence's commitment to marriage expressed in the poems. Amongst his essays, *Assorted Articles* (1930) written in the last eighteen months of his life, pieces such as "Do Women Change?," "Matriarchy," and "Is England Still a Man's Country?" strive to restore authenticity to "life" and "love," to eliminate "falsity" (*P II*, 542). Against this background, and his abiding belief in the institution of

marriage, it is no surprise that Lawrence should have explored relations between the sexes in the second of his Australian novels, *The Boy in the Bush* (1924).

During his voyage to Australia in 1922 Lawrence worked on a translation of Giovanni Verga's *Mastro-Don Gesualdo* (1925). This novel gives us some insight into how Lawrence's view of gender relations was developing in the early 1920s. Verga was a Sicilian author who died in early 1922. In his "Introduction" to Verga's novel Lawrence describes it as "one of the great novels of Europe" (IR, 154:11-12), and its appeal for him is that "Gesualdo Motta has the makings of a hero" (IR, 150:21), whose "objectivity" (IR, 154:35), and lack of "insides," like "the classic Greeks" (IR, 152:16, 14), set him apart from the modern industrial male. Although ultimately critical of the novel's realistic style, a charge he also directs at *Madame Bovary*, Lawrence is fascinated by Gesualdo's capacity to maintain a relationship with both a wife and a mistress, but without the driving force of "love" (IR, 156:1). Instead, Lawrence explains, Gesualdo is motivated by "the old Greek impulse towards splendour and self-enhancement," rather than the modern notion of "ambition" (IR, 156:4-5). Lawrence also draws on Biblical patriarchal and polygamous relationships and so constructs a classical, aristocratic notion of the male role in gender relations, which embodies male authoritarianism. The quest for male authority is most fully expressed in *The Plumed Serpent*, but is also well developed in Lawrence's Australian fiction, particularly *The Boy in the Bush* (1924). In *The Boy*, through the protagonist Jack Grant, Lawrence creates a would-be-heroic character who eschews conventional marriage and family life, explores pluralistic marriage, and dreams of establishing a utopian community in the north-west of Western Australia, in a quest for male regeneration. Jack's quest is, to a great extent, tempered by Lawrentian irony, which is at times apparently self-referential. Nevertheless, the novel's strident assertions of male authority, taken literally, come close to misogyny, particularly as *The Boy* also expresses an acute anxiety about female power. Part of Jack's quest is to counter, or move beyond the reach of, female authority. The intensity of these elements in *The Boy* may, at least in part, be a consequence of Lawrence's temporary (and only) separation from his wife Frieda while writing the novel. But they also form part of enduring explorations and conflicts found throughout Lawrence's work, which reflect wider anxieties expressed at the emergence of "the new woman" and shifting gender roles in the early twentieth century.

Lawrence's experience of family and marriage throw light on his attitudes to gender relations. He grew up in a working class miner's family characterised by a conflict between mother and father. Lawrence wrote that his mother "married below her," that he was "born hating his father," and that between him and his mother there was a "bond" and a "peculiar fusion of soul" (i. 190). Lawrence's sister Ada records that their childhood was miserable (EY, 57). This conflict is a driving theme in *Sons and Lovers* although, as John Worthen points out, that novel should not be taken entirely literally (EY, 57-61). For Lawrence, a neighbouring family, the Chamberses, with their warmth and bucolic rural surroundings at Haggs Farm outside Eastwood, provided a profound contrast to Lawrence's own stifling family life. It served both as a refuge and stimulus, and offered the opportunity for his first romance – with Jessie Chambers. Towards the end of his life, in 1928, Lawrence wrote to David Chambers: "I shall never forget the Haggs – I loved it so. I loved to come to you all, it really was a new life began in me there[...]Oh I'd love to be nineteen again" (vi. 618). This pleasant experience of family is recalled in *The Boy in the Bush*. Jack Grant, who arrives in Australia at "not quite eighteen" finds that the large Ellis family on whose farm at Wandoo he comes to work, displays much of the gregariousness and warmth Lawrence found as a teenager at the Chamberses. He feels "a sort of passionate love for the family – as a savage must feel for his tribe" (BB, 58: 20-21). Importantly, however, even at this early stage, Jack is also "a trifle horrified by it all" (BB, 58:23).

The most powerful ingredient, however, in Lawrence's attitude to family and marriage was his marriage to Frieda. Lawrence met Frieda in March 1912 and their relationship extended until his death in 1930. This relationship, therefore, spans by far the greater part of Lawrence's literary career. Emile Delavany observes that Lawrence failed to realise with Frieda his "dream of complex marriage."<sup>1</sup> In his own accounts of his marriage, as in much of his work, Lawrence grapples with two interrelated dilemmas which help to explain why this dream was not realised. First, how to reconcile his attraction to powerful women with his belief that he should retain final authority. Second, how to reconcile his belief in marriage, and its regenerative possibilities, with his belief in the individual's need for solitude and personal fulfilment and free expression. Lawrence's

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Delavenay, *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and His Work. The Formative Years* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 291.

letters reveal his attitude to these issues, his feelings towards women in general, as well as his feeling towards Frieda and his expectations of marriage. His early ambivalence towards strong women, and Frieda was such a woman, is evident while he was a young man. In 1908 he wrote graphically of his reaction to Sarah Bernhardt whom at 64 he witnessed performing in *La Dame aux Camélias* (EY, 147):

Sarah Bernhardt was wonderful and terrible[....]Oh, to see her, and to hear her, a wild creature, a gazelle with a beautiful panther's fascination and fury, laughing in musical French, screaming with true panther cry, sobbing and sighing like a deer sobs, wounded to death, and all the time with the sheen of silk, the glitter of diamonds, the moving of men's handsomely groomed fingers about her![...]She represents the primeval passions of woman, and she is fascinating to an extraordinary degree. I could love such a woman myself, love her to madness; all for the pure, wild passion of it. Intellect is shed as flowers shed their petals. Take care about going to see Bernhardt. Unless you are very sound, do not go. When I think of her now I can still feel the weight hanging in my chest as it hung there for days after I saw her. (i. 59)

Lawrence also introduces in this letter his belief in the superiority of passion over intellect, despite its terrible power. In a letter of January 1913 he writes that "my religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect" (i. 503). This, as I discussed in chapter 8, was to develop into his construction of "blood-consciousness."

There is a strong sense of physicality in Lawrence's rendering and celebration of his early relationship with Frieda. "For ourselves," he wrote in August 1912, "Frieda and I have struggled through some bad times into a wonderful naked intimacy, all kindled with warmth, that I know at last is love" (i. 440). This he identified as the foundation for marriage. In the same letter he lamented: "Oh, if only people could marry properly, I believe in marriage" (i. 441). In the depths of the World War I he turned to classical studies, anthropology, and ethnology for "lost secrets of better living" (TE, 315-316), and in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell in December 1915, he describes the Ajanta frescoes, reproduced in a book he and Frieda had presented to her as depicting "the perfect perfect intimate relation between the men and the women, so simple and complete, such a very



perfection of passion, a fullness, a whole blossom,” where, importantly for his evolving view of women “there is no Will to Power” (ii. 489). Lawrence’s marriage appears to have become less close by 1917 and from that time on he determined to be less dependent on Frieda (*TE*, 421, 712-713). By the end of the war Lawrence perceived an impasse in what had become a power-play between himself and Frieda. The attribute in Frieda which had attracted Lawrence, the Bernhardt element, now thwarted him. Lawrence identified this in a letter to Katherine Mansfield in December 1918. After partial endorsement of Jung’s theory of “Mother-incest,” he stated that

at certain periods the man has a desire and a tendency to return unto the woman, make her his goal and end, find his justification in her. In this way he casts himself as it were into her womb, and she the Magna Mater, receives him with gratification. This is a kind of incest. It seems to me it is what Jack does to you, and what repels and fascinates you. I have done it, and now struggle [with] all my might to get out. In a way, Frieda is the devouring mother.—It is awfully hard, once the sex relation has gone this way, to recover. If we don’t recover, we die.—But Frieda says I am antediluvian in my positive attitude. I do think a woman must yield some sort of precedence to a man, and he must take this precedence. I do think men must go ahead absolutely in front of their women, without turning round to ask for permission or approval from their women. Consequently the women must follow as it were unquestioning. I can’t help it, I believe this. Frieda doesn’t. Hence our fight. (iii. 302)

Clearly Lawrence was approaching crisis here, with a wife who would not yield “precedence.” Nevertheless, Lawrence continued to affirm “the sacredness of marriage” in an early version of his Whitman essay written in 1921-22 (*SCAL*, 412:9), and seems to have recovered from this difficult patch. In *Sea and Sardinia* (1923) Lawrence makes jocular use of the initials “q-b” to denote a dominant and matriarchal Frieda as the Queen Bee. A similar tone is evident in *Kangaroo* in the highly autobiographical chapter “Harriett and Lovatt at Sea in Marriage,” where Somers strives for supremacy.

Lawrence’s marriage underwent a massive strain in America, after his stay in Australia. He wrote much of *The Boy in the Bush* while travelling with a Danish artist Kai

Gótzsche, at a time of great personal crisis in his relationship with Frieda. It is likely, therefore, that this explains the deep questioning of traditional monogamy in *The Boy*. As Paul Eggert observes, Lawrence's remaining in America at the end of 1923 while Frieda returned to England, during which time he wrote most of *The Boy*, "amounted to a temporary separation" (*BB*, xxvi). The extent of the crisis for Lawrence is evident in two letters he wrote just prior to his leaving America to join Frieda in England, having completed much of *The Boy*, which he was to complete in England before returning to America again in March 1924. To Frieda he wrote with bitter resignation: "I am glad if you have a good time with your flat and your children" (*iv*. 529). He also accommodated the possibility of more permanent separation. "Don't bother about money – why should you," he continued, concluding: "When I come I'll make regular arrangement for you to have an income" (*iv*. 529). In a letter to Frieda's mother, written on the same day, Lawrence expressed his belief in a woman's giving precedence in marriage much as he had expressed in his 1918 letter to Katherine Mansfield. Fresh from writing *The Boy*, where he had created the heroic protagonist Jack Grant, Lawrence also referred to a man's need to follow his heroic destiny, with his wife providing not only love, but an underpinning practical strength:

Frieda doesn't understand that today a man needs to be a hero, and more than a husband. Husband yes, also. But more. I must go back and forth, through the world[...]. And one needs strength and courage and weapons. And the stupid woman always sings love! love! love! (*iv*. 531)

These letters reveal the nature and intensity of Lawrence's struggle to create the kind of marriage which suited him, and to live his own life as a "hero." The letters also express his idea of the sort of adulation he desired in his marriage, and his expectation of female complicity with, rather than resistance to, the male quest.

#### *Gran Ellis's Amputation and the Empowered Feminine*

Lawrence's attitude to women and his assertions of male authority have probably attracted a greater diversity of criticism than any other area of his work. For example, Anaïs Nin, an early and supportive critic, in *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (1932) observes:

“He had a complete realisation of the feelings of woman.”<sup>2</sup> At the other extreme, Lawrence’s attitudes to women have attracted charges of misogyny, notably Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics*, where she refers to his “campaign against the modern woman.”<sup>3</sup> Judith Ruderman identifies the significance and endurance of Lawrence’s struggle with the female in her *D. H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother* (1984), outlining the historical tendency to psychologise Lawrence, which she argues, has resulted in an excessively “oedipal bias” in criticism between his death and the early 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Ruderman, however, does see, in the 1918 Mansfield letter’s insistence on male leadership, evidence to support a view expressed by Herbert Howarth that ““whoever has been mother-overwhelmed may grow to advocate male ascendancy.””<sup>5</sup> There is undoubtedly an anxiety about Lawrence’s attitudes to women which has origins in more generalised concerns which became apparent at the *fin de siècle* with the emergence of the modern or “New Woman.” H. Rider Haggard’s *She* (1887), whose Ayesha, possessed of “dread beauty,”<sup>6</sup> is inescapably alluring and threatens both manhood and empire, is an early, and popular example, which, as I have mentioned. Lawrence was familiar with (*K*, 132:8).

Marianne DeKoven provides an excellent framework for considering the complex, contradictory and obsessive attitudes of modernists like Lawrence, both male and female, to the shifts in gender roles and relations which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth:

Much of this preoccupation expressed a male modernist fear of women’s new power, and resulted in the combination of misogyny and triumphal masculinism that many critics see as central, defining features of modernist work by men. This masculinist misogyny, however, was almost universally accompanied by its dialectical twin: a fascination and strong identification with the empowered feminine. The result was an irresolvable ambivalence toward powerful femininity[...].<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Anaïs Nin, *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (London: Black Spring Press, 1985), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Millet, quoted in Chris Baldick, *Post-Mortem: Lawrence’s Critical and Cultural Legacy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Ruderman, *The Devouring Mother: The Search for a Patriarchal Ideal of Leadership* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Howarth quoted in Ruderman, *D. H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> H. Rider Haggard, *She*, ed., Daniel Karlin (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 1998) p. 229.

<sup>7</sup> Marianne DeKoven, “Modernism and Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 174.

Lawrence's account of the "wonderful and terrible" Sarah Bernhardt recalls the male fascination and anxiety expressed in Haggard's *She*, and points to the "ambivalence" noted by DeKoven. Other recent criticism also tends to see Lawrence's exploration of gender relations as being more even-handed and as embodying oppositional voices, as well as acknowledging its centrality to his search for higher consciousness and new modes of being. There are also varying attitudes evident across Lawrence's work. *The Boy in the Bush*, while admitting oppositional voices, employing humour, and subjecting Jack's triumphal assertions to narratorial irony, represents through the character of Gran Ellis, Lawrence's most extreme articulation of male authority and female submission.

On arrival in Australia, Jack Grant stays with the Ellis family, whose head is Gran Ellis. She is a minor character and it is easy to overlook her significance in the novel, and see her as little more than a diversionary grotesque. Gran, however, is a supremely matriarchal figure and the pivotal authority in the Ellis family. She engenders both dread and fascination. At her first appearance standing in a doorway "like the portrait of an old old lady[...]immovable just looking on, like some ghost," Jack Grant and the Ellis boys scatter from the dinner table (*BB*, 58:12-13). But as a "portrait" Gran is an archetype, a symbol in the novel of all the empowered females that there have ever been. Gran can be seen as a descendant and embodiment of the rapidly ageing and terrifying Ayesha "*growing old*" in Haggard's *She*.<sup>8</sup> From her sick bed Gran shocks her grieving family who believe she is dying, by rising "like a yellow figure of aged female Time...expressionless, timeless and awful...The inexorable female" (*BB*, 154:39-40; 155:2-3). Jack flees, not only from her "respectable dying," but her overpowering femaleness, and plunges into a pool in a bid to "wash off [his] associations" (*BB*, 156:6-7; 18-20).

Daniel Karlin, drawing on Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, notes that *She* has been seen as "a fable about colonialism and male dread,"<sup>9</sup> and these elements are evident in Gran's role as head of a Western Australian colonial extended family. As the most competent member of the extended Ellis family, it is Gran who orchestrated the property arrangements under which the two branches of the family live. It was she, the mother of twin sons, who favoured the Wandoo Ellises, and arranged for Tom Ellis's grandfather to inherit the property even though other members of the family believed that Easu's father

<sup>8</sup> Haggard, *She*, p. 293.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Karlin, "Introduction," *She*, p. xv.

had a stronger claim (*BB*, 64:14-20). She is canny with money. Tom tells Jack: “Gran’s crafty alright! [...] She saved up a stocking—Gran always has a stocking” (*BB*, 64:31-33). She “bought [...] out” Easu Ellis’s side of the family (*BB*, 64:33). Tom also relates that Gran “made” his father marry Mrs Ellis (his stepmother) to ensure his security, and like his father, guards the secret of the identity of his true mother (*BB*, 65:4). No member of either branch of the Ellis family is as competent as Gran. Ma and Pa Ellis’s branch of the family, with whom Jack stays at Wandoo, all have an “empty bewildered vagueness at the middle of them” (*BB*, 56:34). And the neighbouring cousin Ellises, “the Reds” are “a rough crowd of men and youths [...] a bachelor establishment” without parents and subject to the crude leadership of Easu (*BB*, 65: 22-24). Despite her age, Gran continues to make the critical decisions in the extended family. When one of the Red Ellises is badly injured in a fall, it is she who decides whose room he will recover in, bellowing at Tom to “get to work” and make things ready (*BB*, 69:35). Gran also galvanises Jack into action, to get the doctor, and it is then that he notices “to his surprise that she had a wooden leg” (*BB*, 69:37). The shocking revelation that Jack’s maternal grandfather “cut off” Gran’s leg with “no chloroform” denotes her awesome feminine endurance and, read symbolically, the strength of her female character (*BB*, 75:25-7). We must, however, consider why it was necessary to remove Gran’s leg, and what Jack’s role might be as the grandson of the amputator. The novel offers no medical explanation. Gran simply and bitterly recounts to Jack that his grandfather and namesake was a “Devil of a fella [who] wouldn’t let [her] die in peace when [she] wanted to” (*BB*, 75:26-27). This is grimly comical and, as Paul Eggert observes both in regard to *The Boy*, and more generally: “Lawrence rarely allows us to laugh with him in easeful joy.”<sup>10</sup> The reason here is that Lawrence’s humour is part of a broader concern about gender politics. Despite Gran’s immense and enduring power, she was, subjugated by a greater authority exercised by a male. Jack’s grandfather asserted his will over Gran’s by removing her leg. The implication is clear – that a full flowering of Gran’s power would have been unacceptable, hence it was, as it were, “cut back.” She tells Jack that he is a “throw-back” to his “mother’s [English] father” (*BB*, 75:32), which suggests that she must continue to submit to both male and English imperial authority. Jack will continue, in DeKoven’s terms, the “triumphal masculinism” commenced by his English grandfather, and with Gran’s endorsement.

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Eggert, “Introduction,” *Lawrence and Comedy*, eds., Paul Eggert and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 9.

In Gran's amputation there is a notable resonance from Melville's *Moby Dick*. Lawrence critiqued Melville extensively in *Studies in Classic American Literature* which he revised on arrival in America from Australia, in September 1922, before he commenced *The Boy*. The revisions were largely stimulated by his actual experience of America, although in the essay "Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*," Lawrence includes reference to his own modest experience of seafaring "south of Australia" (*SCAL*, 138:32). Having been deeply involved with Melville in the 12 months or so before he commenced *The Boy*, Lawrence appears to have written a little of *Moby Dick* into *The Boy*, borrowing from Melville the trope of the peg-leg. Captain Ahab loses his leg while pursuing Moby Dick. In *The Boy*, Gran, the matriarch, can be seen as "captain" of the Ellis family. Lawrence asserts that Melville's novel signals "the doom of our white day" (*SCAL*, 146:12). Like Ahab's *Pequod*, which for Lawrence represented "the ship of the white American soul" which "sank in the war" (*SCAL*, 147:3-4; 146:39), the Ellis family (and by extension the colonial society in which it exists), headed by Gran, is also a sinking ship. The Ellises at Wandoo are condemned to "insidious tameness" and display a "slight degeneracy" (*BB*, 307:10). Gran, again like Ahab, and with the same infirmity of limb, is driven by a similarly relentless will in pursuit of her goal of controlling the Ellises. Her will extends even beyond death, through her putting aside a hoard for Lennie Ellis (*BB*, 266:29-36). Thus, while Jack comes to the grudging realisation that "*somebody* must control" money, because Australians either "exaggerate the brutal importance of money" or simply "waste" it (*BB*, 265:1-2, 16-17), he develops a deeper antagonism towards Gran's material obsessions and those of the Ellis family. For Jack, money is the corrupting, grubby element which motivates the Ellises. At the counting of Gran's hoard hidden in a chimney "everybody's hands were black" (*BB*, 267:3). As a consequence, Jack realises that he "hated [the Ellis] family and family money business, it smelled to him of death" (*BB*, 267:15-16).

The amputation of Gran's leg also has resonances in several of Lawrence's later works. It anticipates, for example, the sacrifice of the unnamed woman at the hands of the Native American men in "The Woman Who Rode Away." And, as Mark Kinkead-Weekes observes, just as the woman in the "Woman Who Rode Away" may also be viewed as emblematic of an alienated and moribund colonial presence in America,<sup>11</sup> we may also

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<sup>11</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, "Decolonising Imagination," p.75.

read Gran more widely as symbolic of a debilitated British colonial civilisation in Western Australia.

More broadly, however, Gran Ellis also embodies the uncertainties in attitude towards female authority characteristic of modernist writers, noted by DeKoven. Although she is, as it were, cut-back in her efforts to control the Ellis family, Gran is also credited with an earthy pragmatism. Thus, in Jack's eyes, Gran possesses a "queer" yet appealing "philosophy," and advises him that above all in life he must "*earn a good opinion*" of himself (*BB*, 77:27-8, 4-5). "Men are fools and women make 'em what they are," Gran tells him (*BB*, 76:28). Jack, therefore, must avoid the weakness of the "kind-hearted men" who "knuckled under" to their women (*BB*, 77:19, 17). Gran ruminates that her son Mr Ellis of Wandoo is such a man, that "he's got heart disease" and will "never make old bones" (*BB*, 77:17-21)). Jack is also drawn to Gran because of her toughness and because "she was so alone in life" (*BB*, 77:31). She can be reassuring "like Red Riding Hood's grandmother" (*BB*, 72:21), but also as cunning as the fox which supplants the grandmother of the tale.

Ultimately, the whole of Gran's philosophy turns on the survival and perpetuation of family through the institution of marriage. She is obsessive and conventional in her outlook. "More family," Jack laments "wearily" as she launches into one of her tirades (*BB*, 76:12). And it is the wider Ellis family which causes Jack greater concern. He is repelled by their intimacies and the traditional assumptions, particularly marriage, which they aspire to. Early in the novel Jack is unsure what the alternative might be. "What then?" he wonders (*BB*, 71:31). Jack is clear, however, that:

He could not bear the thought of getting married to *one* woman and coming home to a house with only himself and this one woman in it. Then the slow and lonely process of babies coming. The thought of such a future was dreadful to him. He didn't want it. He didn't want his own children. He wanted this family: always this family. And yet there was something gruesome to him about the empty bedrooms and the uncanny privacies even to this family. He didn't want to think of their privacies. (*BB*, 71: 32-39)

Not surprisingly, in a rejection of Gran's matriarchal authority, Jack refuses to be drawn into the matrimonial plans she has for him. When she says to him "you'd better marry Mary. Make up your mind to it," he "instantly[...]rebelled against the thought" (*BB*, 78:3-4), even though he is strongly attracted to Mary, and, subsequently, in Chapter XXIV, proposes a relationship. Jack will not knuckle under, which is what Gran herself advocates in a man. And after her death, and in apparent contradiction, Jack invokes Gran's philosophy in defence of his attempt to take Mary as his second wife, on the grounds that it would accord, as he says "with the God in me," a notion dear to Gran (*BB*, 318), but applying it in a moral context she would have abhorred. Jack, thereby, asserts his will against hers.

*The Boy in the Bush* marks an intensification in Lawrence's fears about the prospects for relations between men and women, exploring conflicts within himself which he struggled to resolve for the rest of his life. *Assorted Articles*, first published in 1930, is described by the editors of *Phoenix II* as "lively journalistic pieces" from the last 18 months of his life and as "easy expressions of some of his profoundest beliefs," and "a kind of philosophical coda to Lawrence's life and work" (*P II*, xiv). He continues to explore gender relations in "Do Women Change?" where he sees the modern woman as a recurring type, whose re-emergence he associates with the decline of civilisation – hence Lawrence's belief in the need for regenerative relations between the sexes. "Modernity or modernism isn't something we've just invented," he writes, adding: "It's something that comes with the end of civilisations" (*P II*, 540). In "Matriarchy," Lawrence celebrates the "end" with a sort of back-handed endorsement of matriarchy as a potentially regenerative force, since it allows for the kind of gender separation Lawrence craves:

[...]So we are in for the monstrous rule of women, and a matriarchy. A matriarch! This seems the last word of horror to the shuddering male. What it means, exactly, is not defined. But it rings with the hollow sound of man's subordination to woman.

[...]But in this matter of matriarchy, let us not be abstract. Men and women will always be men and women.

[...]Under the matriarchal system that preceded the patriarchal system of Father Abraham, the men seem to have been lively sports, hunting and



dancing and fighting, while the women did the drudgery and minded the brats.

Courage! Perhaps a matriarchy isn't so bad, after all. A woman deserves to possess her own children and have them called by her name. As for the household furniture and the bit of money in the bank, it seems naturally hers. Far from being a thing to dread, matriarchy is a solution to our weary social problem.

[...]So! And what about the man, in this dread matriarchy? Is he the slave of the woman? By no means. Marriage, with him, is a secondary consideration, a minor event. His first duty is not to his wife and children—they belong to the clan. His first duty is to the tribe.

[...]Let us drift back to matriarchy. [...]

And so, let men get free again, free from the tight littleness of family and family possessions. Give woman her full independence, and with it, the full responsibility of her independence.

[...]And give the men a new foregathering ground, where they can meet and satisfy their deep social needs, profound social cravings which can only be satisfied apart from women. It is absolutely necessary to find some way of satisfying these ultimate social cravings in men, which are deep as religion in a man. It is necessary for the life of society, to keep us organically vital, to save us from themes of industrial chaos and industrial revolt. (*P II*, 550-552)

Matriarchy, therefore, emerges as the saviour of industrial civilisation. This sort of essentialist analysis of gender roles, where the male has little role in domestic relations and the rearing of a family, fuels charges that Lawrence's quest is phallocentric. On the other hand, perhaps Anaïs Nin sums up Lawrence most perceptively: "The woman who creates a world directly (art or business) is the artist-builder woman. She is not provided for in Lawrence's metaphysics. But the core of her is."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nin, *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, p. 42.

*Masculinity and Mateship*

In *The Boy*, Lawrence asserts the male quest for regeneration, “the need to satisfy their deep social needs,” as outlined later in “Matriarchy,” as a counter to female authority. Lawrence in *The Boy*, however, had not yet formulated his theory of matriarchy put forward in his essay. Jack’s quest to shape his masculinity commences at the beginning of the novel where, having just arrived in Australia, he is overwhelmed by the intensity of Australian female domesticity. Monica, Mary and Grace are part of Jack’s first experience of an Australian household at Aunt Matilda’s in Perth. His public school experience in England has not equipped him for an all-female domain. He is repelled by his Aunt’s colonial lounge room, not simply because of its slavish allegiance to English middle class taste but because it is “a really female setting” (*BB*, 31:39-40). Although it is his rebellious streak, his being a “sinner,” which has landed Jack in Western Australia, he appears effeminate and is mocked by Monica and Grace: ““Oh isn’t he *beau*,”” remarks one of the girls. They marvel at the “rose-buds” on his braces, his “funny green cuff-links” and his monogrammed “white silk muffler,” seeing in him a feminised Englishness (*BB*, 28:25; 33:15, 32, 35). Jack soon discards these trappings. More profoundly, he recalls that in England there was “an *esprit de corps* among men,” whereas in Australia the “men deserted one another as soon as the women put in an appearance” (*BB*, 32:6, 8). This is an early example of the novel’s assertion of a superior British masculinity over the colonial.

There is a patriarchal conception of masculinity in the novel which relies heavily on the Bible and L. D. Clark points out that the link between Jack and Easu and the Old Testament brothers Jacob and Esau is “obvious and significant.”<sup>13</sup> There is a link too, between Easu, with his “reddish hair and staring blue eyes” and Lawrence’s own colouring. Easu has a “power” which Jack knows he himself lacks, suggesting that Easu also functions as a kind of Lawrentian alter ego (*BB*, 65:30-31; 114:21). The contest of masculinity between Jack and Easu also conflates two of the novel’s major themes, empire and race. In the first contest between Jack and (Red) Easu Ellis Lawrence engages two discourses, conflating the Biblical brotherly rivalry with a touch of Social Darwinian evolutionism to champion British old world masculinism over an inferior, degenerate, British colonial variety. After successfully proving his horsemanship on the dangerous “Stampede:”

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<sup>13</sup> L. D. Clark, *The Minoan Distance: The Symbolism of Travel in D. H. Lawrence* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 296.

Red met his [Jack's] eyes, and the two stared at one another. It was the defiance of the colonial, hostile, brutal and retrogressive, against the old mastery of the old country. Jack was barely conscious. Yet he was not afraid, inside himself, of the swivel-eyed, brute of a fellow. [...] Jack had the pride of his own old, well-bred country behind him, and he would never go back on his breeding. He was not going to yield his manliness before the colonial way of life. (*BB*, 69:9-17)

Jack's eventual killing of Easu is the victory of his superior English-bred masculinity over the degenerate colonial Australian. After he has slain Easu, Jack believes that "he had done a good thing" and that now "life could flow on to something beyond" (*BB*, 282:25-27).

By contrast, Jack forges a positive relationship with another Australian Tom Ellis, and a bond emerges which challenges his female relationships. With Tom, Jack establishes a parallel male pseudo-family, at once connected to, and separate from the greater Ellis family. Jack

was absolutely happy, in camp with Tom. Perhaps the most completely happy time in his life. He had escaped the strange new complications that life was weaving around him. Yet he had not left the beloved family. He was with Tom: who after all, was the one that mattered most. Tom was the growing trunk of the tree. (*BB*, 92:4-8)

Monica is threatened by the intensity of this male bond. As Jack prepares to depart with Tom on horseback for a journey to the outback, Monica says with spite: "Let brotherly love continue. [...] Wonder if it will, even unto Camp." (*BB*, 91:25-26)

### *Bigamy in the Bush*

Early in the novel Jack is struck by the terrifying beauty of the young Australian women, Monica and Mary. Their femininity is forthright. Monica is "a she-lion" with "a tawny look" with her bold sensuality recalls the "panther cry" of Lawrence's Bernhardt letter (*BB*,

31:22, 19) noted earlier. Jack is terrified by Mary's presumptuous intimacy as she ties his tie for him:

He held his breath and lifted his eyes to the ceiling and felt as if the front of his body was being roasted. Mary, the devil-puss, seemed endless ages fastening the tie. Then she twitched it at his throat and it was done, just as he was on the point of suffocation. (*BB*, 33:10-13)

Jack later develops a desire for both Mary and Monica, which, after his marriage to Monica, throws open the possibility of his establishing a bigamous relationship with Mary. One basis for the novel's exploration of bigamy is Lawrence's own belief in the primacy of sexual relations in social and personal regeneration. He formalised this notion in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1923) not long before he wrote his Australian novels. "In sex we have our basic, most elemental being" (*PU*, 193:33-34), Lawrence writes. He invents his own biochemistry, suggesting that the "electrodynamic condition of the white and red corpuscles of the blood was quite different after successful coition" (*PU*, 195:1-2). Finally, while Lawrence sees an "electric flow" between "one male and one female" he also sees the possibility that this may also exist between "one male and one particular group of females" (*PU*, 194:17-18).

With Lawrence's analysis in mind, we can now more fully understand the sexual aspect of Jack Grant's regenerative quest in Australia in *The Boy*, and how regenerative sexual relations with Monica and Mary are integral to Jack Grant's vision of regenerated Englishness and community. And the north-west of Australia has a landscape which is infused with sexual energy:

Yes, in the wild bush, god seemed another god[...]. A dread god. But a great god, greater than any known. The sense of greatness, vastness, and newness, in the air. And the strange, dusky-grey, eucalyptus-smelling sense of depth, strange depth in the air, as of a great deep well of potency which life had not yet tapped. Something which lay in a man's blood as well—and in a woman's blood—in Monica's—in Mary's—in the Australian blood. A strange dusky, gum-smelling depth of potency that had never been tapped by experience. As if life still held wells of reserve

vitality[...]and if he could take Monica and set the dusky secret, unknown sap flowing in himself and her, to some unopened life consciousness—that was what he wanted. (*BB*, 227:39-41, 228:1-15)

The passage above is the sort of writing which repels many readers of Lawrence. Is it poetry or mumbo jumbo? It is an example perhaps, of what Michael Bell calls Lawrence's "noisy struggle with language," as he strives to demarcate new levels of consciousness or being.<sup>14</sup> "Lawrence's fiction," Bell explains, "is inescapably philosophical. It explores modes and qualities of being, and consciousness of those modes and qualities."<sup>15</sup> He sees a parallel in Lawrence's strivings with those of Heidegger (whom Lawrence did not read) but who, as Bell notes, experienced comparable difficulties articulating his own conception of being.<sup>16</sup> These difficulties, Bell asserts, result inevitably in "intellectual formulations [which] are otiose or banal."<sup>17</sup> Bell alerts us to the complexity of Lawrence's philosophical vision and the limitations of language in articulating it. Perhaps the "banal" is ultimately in the eyes of the beholder, and in the lyrical passage above, Lawrence, I suggest, overcomes Bell's "difficulties."

If the precise meaning of the "life consciousness" which Jack wants to open in himself and Monica is nebulous, we can, nevertheless see that the experience of it is predicated on a mutuality between Jack and Monica in their sex relation, which on face value appears to resist DeKoven's generalised charges of "misogyny" and "triumphal masculinism" noted earlier. Jack's vision is that the sap should flow in "himself and *her*" (my italics) (*BB*, 228:14). And yet, Jack's ultimate vision embodies what Lawrence saw as the need for the male to take the lead in relations between the sexes, in the quest for mutual spiritual renewal. DeKoven's "triumphal masculinism" comes into play after all. In *Fantasia*, Lawrence urges: "You'll have to fight to make a woman believe in you as a real man, a real pioneer" (*PU*, 198:36-37). This metaphor of the pioneer resounds deeply in *The Boy*. Jack becomes a pioneer in a new vision of gender relations. In *Fantasia*, the modern woman has strayed too far from her primal consciousness. A husband, therefore, must:

<sup>14</sup> Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language into Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Drive [his wife] back into her own true mode. Rip all her nice  
superimposed modern-woman and wonderful-creature garb off her.  
Reduce her once more to a naked Eve, and send the apple flying.  
(*PU*, 198:6-8)

Lawrence revisited this theme in his rendering of a naked Adam and Eve in his painting “Throwing Back the Apple” (1927-8).<sup>18</sup> And similarly in *The Boy*, after returning with Tom from the remote frontier mining areas of the north-west, Jack, the “pioneer,” sees Mary in the street in Perth as the epitome of the comfortable, urban modern woman, conventionally and repressively clad in

a black-and-white striped dress with tight bodice and tight sleeves with a little puff at the top, and a long skirt very full behind. She wore also a little black hat with a wing. And Jack, with a wickedness brought with him out of the North-West, would have liked to rip these stereotyped clothes and corsets off her, and make her walk down Hay Street *in puris naturalibus*. (*BB*, 239:1-6)

Jack’s desire to “rip” off her “clothes” is his desire to divest her of her conventional morality. Jack, although, keen on Monica, issues a further challenge to Mary’s morality through his advocacy of bigamy. This occurs at the governor’s dance, thereby challenging the morality of British colonialism in Western Australian. The dance is satirised from the beginning through Jack’s and Tom’s appearing in ill-fitting suits, Tom having obtained his from a pawnbroker (*BB*, 238:13; 245:11). Jack has undergone a maturation in the north-west of the state. He has “attained his majority” (*BB*, 246:2). He has also become fiercely independent, and “the thought of becoming part of the civilised outfit [is] deeply repugnant to him” (*BB*, 231:16-17). On meeting Mary at the dance he challenges her intention to marry the much older Mr Blessington. “He’s a good man, and he wants me in a good way” (*BB*, 248:31-32), she replies defensively. “Do you *want* him?” he presses, and this brings tears (*BB*, 249:5-7). He is attracted to Mary, but at the same time he recalls his deeper feeling for Monica. “He wanted Monica first. But Mary also was his” (*BB*, 249:11-

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<sup>18</sup> Mervyn Levy, *Paintings of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 99.

12). As a solution, Jack asks himself: ““Why can’t I have both these women?”” and he concludes that: ““You can if you will”” (*BB*, 249:35). Jack sees that she belongs “almost entirely to the social world, her instinct was strongly social. But there was a wild tang in her” (*BB*, 250:22-23). It is her primal wildness which Jack, and the novel, urges must be liberated. “She would be well off” in marriage to Blessington, Jack concedes, but he knows “she would forfeit that bit of a wild tang” (*BB*, 250:27-28). In the north-west Jack discovered his own “wild sap” and he seeks “the wild nature in people” (*BB*, 250:30; 32-33). Consequently, he hates “the element of convention” in Mary (*BB*, 250:35). There is a moral crisis for Mary who “[knows] about Monica,” Jack’s wife, and yet is drawn by Jack’s advances at the dance (*BB*, 249:27).

Mary’s moral dilemma is complicated by the matriarchal Aunt Matilda, “a great lizard,” whom she is “absolutely dependent on” (*BB*, 253:26; 252:3). Whereas the philosophy of another matriarch, Gran Ellis, had some appeal to Jack, Aunt Matilda’s narrow, and one-dimensional morality stands in total opposition to him. She is aware that Mary is “heavy for any man to take up with” and accuses Jack of wanting her only for “*one night*” and creating scandal (*BB*, 253:15-16; 12). Aunt Matilda sees Jack’s prospects as poor and the much older Mr Blessington, by contrast, is “a wonderful match” for Mary (*BB*, 253:17). Following Aunt Matilda’s admonishments Jack redoubles his efforts to win Mary. While “he wanted Monica first[...]he was not going to let go of Mary[...]not in spite of battalions of Aunt Matilda’s” (*BB*, 254:17-19). Jack’s cruel device for winning Mary, is to play Mary and Aunt Matilda at their own materialist game. After setting up a “rubber of whist” to distract Aunt Matilda and luring Mary away from Blessington, he dangles before Mary the possibility of a life on his farm. “In two years I shall have a farm for you to live on” (*BB*, 256:34). At a stroke, the novel exposes her material aspirations. The wolfish Jack kisses Mary to seal the bargain, but breathes no hint of marriage at this point. And in a nasty deception, he tells old Mr George that it is Tom who cares for Mary (*BB*, 257:9-10).

An important part of Mary’s attraction to Jack is her likely Aboriginal blood. While he is repelled by the more obviously Aboriginal Lily, the possibility of a remote mixed race ancestry is enticing, and has improved an already aristocratic English blood-line. “Where had Mary got that queer aboriginal look, she the grand-daughter of an English earl” (*BB*, 261:4-5), he wonders.

R. P Draper argues that “The Fox” (1920) and “The Woman Who Rode Away” (1925) are “tales about the defeat of woman’s independence, and are part of Lawrence’s

answer to the suffragettes,” and that the latter story is outright “vindictive.”<sup>19</sup> It is tempting to apply Draper’s analysis to *The Boy* which was written between these two stories. The question, perhaps, turns on the extent to which readers are convinced that Lawrence presents scenarios which advance the interests of his female characters. Following Kate Millet’s condemnations of Lawrence’s misogyny, Chris Baldick reports a key shift in the understanding of Lawrence’s oeuvre, “the re-emergence of the ‘contradictory’ Lawrence,” and the realisation that Lawrence’s work involves “explorations” rather than “fixed doctrine.”<sup>20</sup> Recent criticism also points to the strength of the female characters in Lawrence’s work and their role in contesting male voices. Carol Siegel sees Lawrence as essentialist in his view of gender relations, and that “the fundamental conflict in Lawrence’s fiction” is “the discrepancy between male and female world views.”<sup>21</sup> Siegel notes, however, that Lawrence employs “real female voices” who “successfully compete with Lawrence’s dictatorial male pronouncements.”<sup>22</sup> In setting up an argument Lawrence employs what Siegel sees as “sound rhetorical practice” where at times “he makes such a good case for the opposition he is unable to refute it.”<sup>23</sup> Importantly, Siegel notes that “Lawrence’s voices in opposition are almost always also oppositely gendered,” and as a consequence are not simply Bakhtin’s dialogics at work but represent an example of Dale Bauer’s refinement of Bakhtin’s theory.<sup>24</sup> These observations by Baldick and Siegel point to balance in Lawrence’s exploration of gender relations. Siegel observes that heroines such as Ursula in *Women in Love*, March in “The Fox,” Hannele in “The Captain’s Doll” and Harriett in *Kangaroo* “never give in to their lovers’ demands for their submission.”<sup>25</sup> To return to *The Boy in the Bush*, the female voices of Aunt Matilda and Mary, at the Governor’s dance *do* strongly oppose Jack’s voice, and the equally substantiated arguments put forward by the two parties illustrate, I suggest, the “rhetorical practice” noted by Siegel. This knocks at least some of the edge off DeKoven’s general charge of “triumphal masculinism.”

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<sup>19</sup> R. P. Draper, “The Defeat of Feminism: D. H. Lawrence’s “The Fox” and “The Woman Who Rode Away,” in *Critical Essays on D. H. Lawrence*, eds. Dennis Jackson and Fleda Brown Jackson (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1988), pp. 158-9, 167.

<sup>20</sup> Baldick, “Post-Mortem: Lawrence’s Critical and Cultural Legacy,” p. 265.

<sup>21</sup> Siegel, *Lawrence Among the Women*, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.



Thus Lawrence continues to employ gendered oppositions in the contest between the two moral voices. They reach a climax in Chapter XXIV, "The [bigamous] Offer to Mary." By this time much has happened since the Governor's Dance. Easu is slain and Jack has established himself in the north-west with Monica, now his wife, their children, her child by Easu, in company with the faithful Tom. At this point Jack meets with Mr George, Mary and Hilda Blessington to discuss his inheritance of a property from his distant relative, John Grant. Jack is loquacious, and overbearing towards Aunt Matilda and Mr George but charming towards the young women. Hilda, lately introduced into the novel at the Governor's dance, is now further developed, and displays a strong interest in Jack's ideas about being true to one's self. "What is the spark that one must be faithful to?" (*BB*, 317:39-40), she asks. Jack invokes Gran Ellis and her belief in being true to one's own God (*BB*, 318:11-12), and then startles the assembly by asserting that he could legitimately want "two wives-even three" (*BB*, 318:22). In addition to possessing Monica, he wants to "throw a sort of lasso" around Mary and Hilda" (*BB*, 318:36). This would result in "three fortunes for [his] blood and spirit" (*BB*, 318:31:32). To further his case Jack asserts a morality which is more generous and humane as well as less materialistic than that represented by Aunt Matilda and Mary. He proudly declares that he is caring for Easu's child Jane, and the news is received "as if a bomb had been dropped" (*BB*, 315:2-3). The contrast between his vision, predicated on the primacy of physical relations between man and woman, and Mary's continuing concern for moral propriety and material security is manifest when Jack shows Mary the Grant farm which he has just inherited. Mary warms to Jack's suggestion that she might live on the land, in the existing house, or, in a new one, assuming that it would be as "a sort of Auntie to his and Monica's children" (*BB*, 322:17). The narrator reports that "she was fairly jumping into old maiddom" (*BB*, 322:17-18). But Jack's offer is two-tiered, and the first is a precursor to the second. He challenges her to leave "Aunt-Matilda-ism" (*BB*, 327:40), because Aunt Matilda is "one of life's false statements" (*BB*, 326:11), inviting her to decide whether to stay on the proposed land on her own to "to cultivate [her own] Mary-ism or[...]come to the North-West?" (*BB*, 327:40; 328:8-9), and join Monica and the children. Jack's desire for union with Mary is founded on the proposition that "all women are only parts of some whole" (*BB*, 332:36). He is, therefore, offering her completeness. At first, Mary does not reject Jack, thereby revealing a measure of calculation at the heart of her respectability. She wants to know what Monica would think, and the philosophy behind Jack's vision of having more than one wife. But

Jack “realised he had taken the wrong tack. The one thing he should never have done, he had begun to do: explain and argue” (*BB*, 328:21; 38-39), since it is the intellectualising of relationships which is precisely what Jack wishes to demolish. This leads to falsehood of the Aunt Matilda variety. Mary must rely on her instincts. And so to Jack it is absurd that she should reject his offer out of respectability, when he believes that there is “not doubt” (*BB*, 330:3-4) that she would listen to him if he was prepared to leave Monica. For Jack, however, leaving Monica is tantamount to divorce, “a shifty business,” and instead, he invokes “the old heroes, the old fathers of red earth, like Abraham in the bible” who “took the wives they needed for their own completeness” (*BB*, 330:8, 16-18). Jack is certain that Mary’s “womb [is] asking for him” (*BB*, 330:37) and his invitation that she sleep with him in the barn is her last chance to shake off her conventional morality. But this she cannot do. In anguish she says to Jack: “I hate my animal nature” (*BB*, 331:37). Jack is furious. “If I asked Mary to sleep with me, as a sin, as something I shouldn’t,” he says to himself bitterly, “she’d give in to me like anything” (*BB*, 335:34-6). It is her hypocrisy (as he would have it) which incenses him, her final failure to acknowledge an instinctual basis for relationship.

Jack’s challenge to Mary is also Lawrence’s challenge to the reader. Is Jack’s “torture” (*BB*, 331:37) of Mary a convincing assertion of liberation and regenerative consciousness? Or, given the casual manner in which he reports his feelings for Monica and Mary, that “sometimes it’s one, then the other” (*BB*, 331:33), does our sympathy lie with Mary’s concern for moral correctness and security. The jeering, narratorial summation that Jack’s “little plans [had] come to nought” (*BB*, 332:26), deeply contests his vision at this point. But the chapter concludes with a clear re-statement of Jack’s quest, his rejection “one-couple-in-one-cottage domesticity” (*BB*, 333:2), and the embracing of a wider community which includes “the faithful Tom and Lennie” (*BB*, 333:2, 7-8). Importantly, Jack’s vision specifically embraces a new kind of freedom for women, for men and women based on a regenerative bigamy or polygamy. Jack wants:

Wives. Not wife. And the horses, and the come-and-go, and the element of wildness. Not to be tamed. His men, men by themselves. And his women never to be tamed. And the wilderness still there. He wanted to go like Abraham under the wild sky, speaking to a fierce wild Lord, and having angels stand in his doorway. (*BB*, 333:8-13)

But Mary rejects Jack's offer to become his second wife. He curses her wanting to break her "link" with him and become an "upholstered old maid" (*BB*, 333:26-27). Mary's rejection of a plural relationship supports Siegel's proposition about competing voices. Ultimately, however, in Jack's, and the novel's, and Lawrence's terms, Mary's voice is extinguished. She has defeated herself, and lost the chance for fulfilment of her own spiritual potential, because she can not entertain the risk of overturning convention. Lawrence was clearly aware of the incendiary nature of Jack's bigamous proposal but deeply committed to it. He warned Mollie Skinner that she "might quarrel a bit with the last two chapters" (*iv*. 596). And he took the trouble to defend his position most explicitly, writing:

But after all, if a man really has cared, and cares, for two women, why should he suddenly shelve either of them? It seems to me more immoral to suddenly drop all connection with one of them, than to wish to have the two. (*iv*. 596)

With Monica Lawrence does not present one of Siegel's oppositional female voices. Unlike Mary's, Monica's voice is never fully developed. The feisty Monica of the novel's opening scenes in Perth, who so terrifies Jack soon after his arrival gradually falls away. As their relationship develops, Monica must "give up to" Jack who "demanded this submission, as if it were a submission to his mysterious Lord" (*BB*, 168:3-5). By the end of the novel she fears that Jack might "ship her back to Perth, and put her out of his life for ever" (*BB*, 303:5-6). Jack "had mastered Monica, who had wanted to be a domestic bitch playing wild. He had captured her wildness, to mate his own wildness" (*BB*, 307:12-14). Monica is also punished for her former relationship with Easu, her having been "made sticky by that heavy dog of an Easu" (*BB*, 283:24). Monica must live under Jack's authority. "You won't oppose me when there is anything I want to do, will you?" Jack asks her, and Monica replies "'no...in a dead little voice'" (*BB*, 300:26-27, 29). Crucially, therefore, Jack's dream of mutual growth, of getting "the sap flowing in himself and her, to open some unopened life consciousness" is never fully realised (*BB*, 228:12-14). At the conclusion of the novel "he just possessed her, mysteriously owned her, and went ahead with his own obsessions" (*BB*, 302:36-8). While Monica does not assert an alternative set

of moral values, she is not entirely silenced, and maintains a threatening separateness from Jack, despite her acquiescence. Stung by Mary's rejection, Jack ruminates that Monica "has her rights too, and the moment she thinks I trespass on them, she will unsheathe her fangs" (*BB*, 336:15-17). And his bitter resolve that neither Mary nor Monica "shall[...]bite [his] genitals" (*BB*, 336:36), reveals that he feels utterly demoralised in his hopes for a regenerative marriage with either of the two women:

‘What a fool! To think of Abraham, and the great men in the early old days. To think that I could build up land in the North-West, a big wild stretch of land, and build my house and raise my cattle and live as Abraham lived, at the beginning of time, but myself at another, later beginning. With my wives and the children of my wives, and Tom and Lennie with their families,’[...].  
[...]‘A little world of my own!—As if I could make it with the people who are on earth today!’ (*BB*, 337:25-30; 338:5-6)

The novel asserts that it is wider human society, not Jack, which remains out of step. It is still pressing us to decide whether or not Jack is a fool or a visionary.

In invoking biblical precedents, Lawrence is resorting to a rather clever device to contest contemporary morality, and this repays closer examination. T. R. Wright documents Lawrence's massive debt to the Bible, concluding that "the Bible is the text which his own work most obviously and most often reworks."<sup>26</sup> Lawrence's reworking, Wright observes, involves a "bold freedom of interpretation more often associated with postmodernity."<sup>27</sup> He asserts: "Lawrence clearly appreciated the fact that the Bible made no systematic theological claims, embodying its religious insights in a range of self-conscious literary forms: story, fable, myth, epic, history, poetry, letter and vision."<sup>28</sup> Importantly, Wright also points to Lawrence's having learned from Nietzsche "the potential of biblical narrative to be retold against the grain of its original authorial intention."<sup>29</sup> He provides an example from *The Boy*, citing Lawrence's description of Jack's offer to Mary to sleep with him in the barn as Jack's refusal to "play the mild St Joseph" (*BB*, 331:14).

<sup>26</sup> T. R. Wright, *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Wright, appears to be slightly offended by this parody, and seeing this as “a deliberately provocative reworking of the details of Christ’s nativity.”<sup>30</sup> Even more provocative, however, is the bigamous basis of Jack’s offer to Mary and, overlooked by Wright, its actual grounding in biblical precedent. Here Lawrence retells the Bible but *with* its literal, Old Testament grain (despite the manifest difficulty in anyone identifying the Bible’s overall grain). Jack’s longing to be a Biblical Abraham or David is not a playful reworking or a parody of the Bible but a literal transposing of the Biblical endorsement of bigamy:

Why not? And why not make a marriage with her too? The legal marriage with Monica, his own [Scotch] marriage with Mary. It was a natural thing. The old heroes, the old fathers of red earth, like Abraham in the bible, like David even, they took the wives they needed for their own completeness, without this nasty chop-and-change business of divorce. (*BB*, 330:14-19.

In this instance, it is the grain of contemporary society which Lawrence is writing against. Bigamy is preferable to divorce. This direct challenge to the reader of the 1920s, remains confronting today.

With Mary’s rejection of Jack’s offer, and Monica’s absence and preoccupation with the children in the north-west, Jack’s quest to engage in plural relations on his own terms, as a means to spiritual regeneration, collapses. The re-emergence, however, of Hilda Blessington as a central character in the final chapter (previously she has made only minor appearances) disturbs the pessimism surrounding the collapse of Jack’s hopes for a relation with both Monica and Mary. Paul Eggert notes in his introduction to the Penguin edition, the abrupt change in tone which occurs in the movement from the provisionality engendered by Jack’s soul-searching in the penultimate chapter, to the optimistic future suggested by the arrival of Hilda.<sup>31</sup> Eggert sees the second last chapter as “the more likely ending” and the final chapter as an expression of a (theoretically) infinite number of re-workings by Lawrence.<sup>32</sup> The change in tone between the two chapters is so marked that, in many respects, the last chapter does resemble the first chapter of a new novel. Our satisfaction with the endings depends ultimately, I suggest, on whether we are repelled by

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> Eggert, “Introduction,” *The Boy in the Bush* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p. xxx.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Jack's egotism or convinced by his idealism. Certainly, for Lawrence, the final chapter is an expression of idealism. As Eggert also points out, in his introduction to the Cambridge edition, the stimulus for the final ending derives, in part at least, from Lawrence's return to England where he wrote the final chapter, and Dorothy Brett's undertaking to accompany Lawrence and Frieda back to New Mexico for a fresh start at Rananim (*BB*, xxxii). This explains the sense of dislocation in the final chapter from the earlier events in the novel. But the importance of the ending lies not simply in its overall vigour exemplified by the powerful (and as Eggert notes) proleptic evocation of the coupling horses,<sup>33</sup> but in the challenge presented by Hilda as an ideal mate for Jack Grant. The "fiasco with Mary" (*BB*, 341:16) is, to a large extent, a reflection of her fundamental incompatibility with Jack, and Monica's quasi-submission results in part from her and her child's dependence on Jack. The truly exciting and challenging development for Jack, therefore, is that there is in Hilda the potential for a partner who shares his belief in multiple relationships. Hilda is attracted to Jack's vision of plural marriage: "I might like to be a man's second or third wife[...]I would never be the first," she tells Jack (*BB*, 346:15-18). Is this superficial banter, or an affirmation of the novel's moral position? Hilda appears to be issuing a strong challenge to Jack to be true to his vision, and to keep his word in their bargain to have a relationship in the future (*BB*, 347:32-33). Jack, however, responds with laughter and amusement, although he respects her "fearlessness" and can see that she has journeyed further to the "borderline" of endeavour and consciousness than even himself (*BB*, 346: 29; 347:6, 10-11). The brief exchanges between Jack and Hilda are unstable in tone, and illustrate Lawrence's use of what Paul Eggert describes as the "untraditional kinds of commentary" which can flow from Lawrence's recourse to Bakhtinian "flexibilities of voice."<sup>34</sup> *The Boy*, therefore, has flexible as well as oppositional voices. The overall light-heartedness of Jack's and Hilda's conversation seems to work against the attainment of their resolve to meet in the north-west. One reason for this is Lawrence's own ambivalence as to whether a man should seek singularity or union. In an early version of *Studies* Lawrence wrote that

at the extreme of being, where life is at its brightest, and where it is at its nearest to death, the male is alone, projected beyond the female. At this

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Eggert, "Comedy and Provisionality: Lawrence's Address to His Audience and Material in his Australian Novels," in *Lawrence and Comedy*, eds. Paul Eggert and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 137.

extreme stage, the female has her young, man has his final activity apart.  
*SCAL*, 412:31-34)

This proposition is affirmed through Jack Grant's solitary ride at the end of the novel, where he remains "apart" and "projected beyond the female," beyond Gran, Aunt Matilda, Mary, Monica and Hilda.

In the wider context of British literature, Michael Bell observes that Lawrence's treatment of marriage in his fiction arises out of its presence as a "structural element" of British fiction until the close of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Bell sees in Lawrence's career "a shift from a positive and central vision of marriage to an effective separation of 'true marriage' from social institution," as well as Lawrence's "assertion of 'singleness.'"<sup>36</sup> He also sees a biographical relation, observing that over the period of Lawrence's pilgrimage novels, in response to his living with a powerful woman, Lawrence projects "a counter-assertion of male sexual dominance," which Bell finds "damaging."<sup>37</sup> The authority vested in the female voices in Lawrence's novels, as noted by Siegel, Eggert's "flexibilities," and Jack Grant's failure to achieve sexual dominance, and his new vision of plural marriage, all combine to moderate Bell's "damaging" finding, and show just how difficult it is to pin Lawrence down. *The Boy* is unstable at its conclusion, and as Eggert points out, the realisation of Jack's vision is "deferred beyond the end of the novel."<sup>38</sup> There are, therefore, many voices and many possibilities at the conclusion of *The Boy*. While Jack is no longer "lost" in the bush (*BB*, 347:40), he does not achieve a regenerative union with a woman, or women, on his own terms.

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<sup>35</sup> Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language into Being*, p. 142.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

10. THE ARISTOCRAT IN RANANIM: SOME TEXTUAL ORIGINS FOR THE MALE REGENERATIVE QUEST IN *THE BOY IN THE BUSH*

In 1915 Lawrence wrote to William Hopkin: "I want to gather together about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony" (ii. 259). In chapter 2 I discussed the importance of what Lawrence came to call his idea of community, Rananim. In *The Boy in the Bush*, published in 1924, we find a problematic exploration of this vision in a fictional form. Jack Grant asserts that his regenerative mission in the north-west of Western Australia is "to make a place on earth for a few aristocrats-to-the-bone" (BB, 308:1-13). The regenerative "quest" has long been recognised as central to Lawrence's vision. L. D. Clark describes *The Boy in the Bush* as one of Lawrence's "pilgrimage novels," a category in which he also includes *Aaron's Rod*, *The Lost Girl*, *Mr Noon*, *Kangaroo*, and *The Plumed Serpent*.<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, Michael Bell observes that *Aaron's Rod* "inaugurates the questing novels of Lawrence's middle career,"<sup>2</sup> and although he does not expressly include *The Boy in the Bush* in this category, it is clearly correct to do so. The novella *St. Mawr*, should also be appended to this list. Clark observes that the pilgrimage novels "aim at re-birth of the human soul, through new access to the power of instinct, access gained only by pilgrimage from a wasteland to a land of regeneration."<sup>3</sup> Clark's reference to the "human soul" highlights the centrality of the individual in Lawrence's regenerative vision. Paul Eggert sees Lawrence as "working through the implications for his time of Nietzsche's deconstruction of the nineteenth-century belief in the individual as (ideally) a politically responsible unit."<sup>4</sup> Eggert concludes that Lawrence, stimulated by what he saw as the human failure of World War I, "wanted to find a way of regathering the scattered emotional and psychological forces both for individuals and for his society."<sup>5</sup> There are in *The Boy* visions of both personal and social regeneration—visions of a new consciousness and a new community in north-west Western Australia. In the previous chapter I considered the role of gender relations in Jack Grant's regenerative

<sup>1</sup> L. D. Clark, "Making the Classic Contemporary: Lawrence's Pilgrimage Novels and American Romance," in *D. H. Lawrence in the Modern World*, eds. Peter Preston and Peter Hoare (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Bell, D. H. Lawrence: *Language into Being*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Clark, "Making the Classic Contemporary," p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Eggert, "Introduction," *The Boy in the Bush* (Penguin Books), p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



vision. In this chapter I re-examine Jack as an example of questing Lawrentian hero. L. D. Clark observes that “Jack Grant is one of the most successful of Lawrence’s pilgrims,” largely because “Jack is able to pursue his destiny without being vexed by politics.”<sup>6</sup> Clearly *The Boy* is not a political novel in the way *Kangaroo* or *The Plumed Serpent* are, but it is important to note that the novel does engage the geo-political colonial origins of Western Australia and its British Isles convict heritage. It lampoons the colonial “high society” centred around the governor.

Post-structuralist theories of intertextuality, such as Roland Barthes’s assertions that “a text” is “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them original, blend and clash” and “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture,”<sup>7</sup> have sharpened reader awareness of how texts can be interconnected, particularly unconsciously. Barthes’s observations are part of his overarching theories about the nature of creative writing itself, and are beyond the scope of this chapter. But Barthes reminds us of the many ways in which texts can be interconnected, consciously and unconsciously. This chapter, therefore, discusses a range of texts, largely novels, which I believe can inform our understanding of some of the inspirations for Jack Grant, the pilgrim hero. I will begin with an examination of Lawrence’s critical response to the Bible, which becomes apparent after his youth, and which is evident in both *Kangaroo* and *The Boy*. I will then examine Jack Grant’s quest in the light of the heroes and utopian visions depicted in two classic works, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) and *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). I will also consider examples from American romantic adventure literature, whose western cowboy element has, in my view been over inscribed onto *The Boy*, as well as Lawrence’s exposure to Australian fiction, which I have already touched on, and which, to date, has been overlooked by critics in their readings of *The Boy*. In writing *The Boy*, therefore, Lawrence derived inspiration from a range of sources. Frequently, however, Lawrence enters into open contest with his sources. He often writes against the grain, reworking or subverting stereotypes and archetypes in his attempt to articulate a new vision. The result, in *The Boy in the Bush*, is an innovative novel of far greater originality and richness than has been appreciated.

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<sup>6</sup> Clark, *The Minoan Distance*, p. 295.

<sup>7</sup> Roland Barthes in K. M. Newton, ed. *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader* (Houndmills, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), p. 122.

*Lawrence and the Bible*

L. D. Clark places Jack Grant's quest in both English and American literary traditions. Signalling the English Puritan spiritual dimension in *The Boy*, Clark describes Jack as "Bunyanesque."<sup>8</sup> In describing *The Boy* as "Bunyanesque", Clark signals the spiritual dimension of Jack's quest in the novel, the importance of Lawrence's own Puritan Christian upbringing and deep familiarity with the Bible, and of course, his familiarity with Bunyan's great allegory of Christian spiritual regeneration, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which I will discuss in detail later in the chapter. The depth of Lawrence's Christian upbringing and the extent of his later disillusionment are revealed in a letter of December 1907 to the Rev. Robert Reid, a Congregational Minister in Lawrence's home town of Eastwood: "I have been brought up to believe in the absolute necessity for a sudden spiritual conversion; I believed for many years that the Holy Ghost descended and took conscious possession of the 'elect' – the converted one," Lawrence wrote (*i.* 39). In the same letter he added: "I do not, cannot believe in the divinity of Jesus," and nor could he believe in a God which permitted "the level of suffering" found on earth (*i.* 40). Lawrence never regained his faith. Towards the end of his life, Lawrence reflected in *Apocalypse* (1931) that his exposure to the Bible had been tantamount to brainwashing:

From earliest years right into manhood, like any other non-conformist child I had the Bible poured every day into my helpless consciousness, till there came almost a saturation point. Long before one could think or even vaguely understand, this Bible language, [...] became an influence which affected all the processes of emotion and thought. So that today, although I have 'forgotten' my Bible, I need only begin to read a chapter to realise that I 'know' it with an almost nauseating fixity. And I must confess, my first reaction is one of dislike, repulsion, and even resentment. My very instincts *resent* the Bible. (*A*, 3)

And yet for Lawrence, the Bible was an immense source of inspiration, albeit contested, and there appears to be much of Lawrence in Jack Grant, the protagonist in *The Boy*:

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<sup>8</sup> Clark, *The Minoan Distance*, p. 296.

The only prize Jack ever won at school was for scripture. The bible-language exerted a certain fascination over him, and in the background of his consciousness the bible images always hovered. When he moved it was scripture that came to his aid. So now he stood, silent with the shyness of youth, thinking over and over: 'There shall be a new heaven and a new earth.' (*BB*, 8:3-8)

In chapter 9 I briefly considered T. R. Wright's observations about Lawrence's re-working of the Bible in the context of Lawrence's contestation of traditional marriage in *The Boy*. Wright notes that while Lawrence's "language is permeated by the rhythms of the Authorised Version," Lawrence's "intertextual wrestling" can be seen as "a powerful, wide-ranging and sustained critique of the Bible in light of modernity."<sup>9</sup> Along with *Aaron's Rod*, Wright aptly describes *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* in Biblical terms, as "Books of Exodus."<sup>10</sup> In *Kangaroo*, Somers voluntarily exits Europe because it is "played out, finished, and he must go to a new country" (*K*, 13:37-38), and in *The Boy*, Jack's being "sent out of England" marks the origin of his quest in Australia (*BB*, 7:5-6). Bible stories frame much of the narrative in *The Boy*. As Wright notes, *The Boy* reworks the Cain and Abel story.<sup>11</sup> The novel also re-deploys the Biblical Jacob and Esau brotherly rivalry in the contest between the branches of the Ellis family.<sup>12</sup>

Crucially, Lawrence combines the use of Biblical frames with a profound redrawing of the picture within. In both *The Boy* and in *Kangaroo*, the reworking is so pervasive that it is difficult to find instances of where Lawrence is *not* contesting the Bible and received Christianity. As Wright observes in relation to *Kangaroo*, the Biblical references "are for the most part pejorative," and the highly autobiographical Somers is "concerned about breaking from the Judeo-Christian tradition."<sup>13</sup> In *The Boy* too, we may make a similar observation. The narrator lampoons the ritual solemnity, the "little eternity" of the Ellis family's weekly Bible reading (*BB*, 141:15), and Jack, we are told

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<sup>9</sup> Wright, *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 148.

never really connected the bible with christianity proper, christianity of aunts and clergymen. He had no use for christianity proper: just dismissed it. But the bible was perhaps the foundation of his consciousness.  
(*BB*, 141:20-23)

Although “Jack knew the bible pretty well” (*BB*, 141:16), as Lawrence himself did, from the commencement of *The Boy* we are made aware of Jack’s profound disconnection from the Christianity of his childhood. After disembarking at Fremantle Jack surveys the scene and we learn that “right in the middle of the township was a stolid new Victorian church with a turret: and this was the one thing he knew he disliked in the view” (*BB*, 8:16-19). It is clear, therefore, from this point early in the novel, that Jack’s spiritual search will not centre around contemporary received Christianity. In *The Boy*, therefore, biblically inspired imagery is a literary device, not a source of doctrinal belief. Received Christian doctrine has failed. At the end of the novel, Jack reflects: “Let there be another, deeper, fiercer, untamed sort of goodness, like in the days of Abraham and Samson and Saul” because “the Christian goodness has gone bad, decayed almost into poison” (*BB*, 319:24-26, 28-29). He despairs at not being able to follow the example of his Old Testament heroes. Jack laments to himself: ““What a fool! To think of Abraham and the great men in the early old days” (*BB*, 337: 25-26). The despair, we feel is also Lawrence’s, for here we see him attempting to write himself and his own vision, as it were, back into the *Bible* – to bring new life into it. As he lamented, in another letter to the Rev. Robert Reid in 1911: “If only we were allowed to look at Scripture in the light of our own experience, instead of having to see it displayed in a kind of theatre, false-real, and never developing” (*i.* 244). One way in which Lawrence attempts this is through his inversions of received Christian doctrine, which I suggest, are stronger than Wright suggests.

I have outlined Lawrence’s contestation of received Darwinian theory. Although he was clearly influenced by scientific thinkers such as Darwin and Herbert Spencer, it seems clear that, as John Worthen observes, Lawrence wanted “to rescue human consciousness[...]from the clutches of merely scientific understanding” and critically, wanted to “argue for man’s religious nature and experience, but not from a Christian standpoint” (*EY*, 183). A manifestation of this non-Christian “religious nature” is embodied in Jack Grant’s desire in *The Boy* to be a Lord of Death:

Jack hoped he would die a violent death. He hoped he would live a defiant, unsubmitive life, and die a violent death. A bullet, or a knife piercing home. And the women he left behind—his women, enveloped in him as in a dark net. And the children he left, laughing already at death. And himself! He hoped never to be downcast, never to be melancholy, never to yield. Never to yield. To be a Lord of Death. (*BB*, 218:21-27)

The “Lord of Death,” in part, has its origins in “the dark God” of *Kangaroo*, and in chapter 8 I examined its connection with Australian Aborigines. Wright observes that *Kangaroo* is “deeply religious, sketching its hero’s search for a credible faith, a quest for personal fulfilment which embraces new concepts of the divine, ‘dark gods’ beyond the moralistic monotheistic Judeo-Christian tradition.”<sup>14</sup> Wright, however, seems to imply that Christianity still operates as a foundation spiritual belief system for Lawrence. However, in *Kangaroo* the “dark gods”, and in *The Boy* “the Lord of Death” both speak actively and persistently *against* the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” demonstrably shaking its foundations, rather than simply moving “beyond” the tradition, as Wright suggests. Wright’s conclusion, therefore, that Lawrence was involved in a “creative dialogue with the Bible in a manner which both recognises its power and its importance,”<sup>15</sup> proposes a far greater acceptance by Lawrence of the Christian theology contained in the Bible than both the biographical evidence and Lawrence’s fiction demonstrate. And it is at odds with his own observation that Lawrence is involved in a “sustained critique” of the Bible.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as I have observed, in *The Boy*, Jack draws on the Bible to challenge conventional Christian marriage, through his desire, inspired by Old Testament patriarchs, for an additional union with Mary. Ingeniously, Lawrence uses the Bible to subvert the contemporary interpretation of its message.

There is a danger, therefore, that in identifying the sheer magnitude and richness of Lawrence’s engagement with the Bible, and his creative debt to it, that we overlook Lawrence’s complete rejection of the Bible’s Christian message. In *Kangaroo*, Wright sees Lawrence as being more successful in evoking “a sense of the mysterious in describing precise moments,” than in “attempting to bludgeon his readers into abandoning traditional

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

Judeo-Christian beliefs.”<sup>17</sup> Successful or not, Lawrence’s intention is clear. Somers (and Lawrence) in *Kangaroo*, is not “wrestling with the Bible,”<sup>18</sup> but driving nails into the coffin of its Christian message. Somers, welcomes “the collapse of the love ideal” (K, 328:17), asserts that “there was not only one God”, but also “the dark god” (K, 327:16, 38), and that “the only thing one can stick to is one’s own isolate being, and the God in whom it is rooted” (K, 328:19-20). Somers’s rejection of Australia, therefore, is as much founded upon his rejection of the Judeo-Christian morality of Cooley as it is upon his rejection of Cooley’s fascism and the socialism of Struthers. Wright’s observation, therefore, that Lawrence rejected the “Congregational orthodoxy” of his youth, and that his attitude to the Bible, was “ambivalent” understates the extent of Lawrence’s attack on Christianity in his work.<sup>19</sup> Wright asserts that in *Kangaroo*, Somers “cannot entirely rid himself of these fragments of the Bible, which remain attached to him, to employ his own metaphor, like the broken bits of his own former tether.”<sup>20</sup> The point, surely, is that Somers (like Lawrence) does *not want* to “rid himself” of the Bible – rather he delights in his ability to rework his knowledge of the Bible as a means of contesting its moral and spiritual vision. Both *The Boy* and *Kangaroo* demonstrate that the Lawrentian spiritual quest envisages a morality other than that found in the Bible.

### *A Pilgrim’s Progress in Australia*

L. D. Clark’s description of *The Boy* as “Bunyanesque,” alerts us to the resonances in the novel of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678). As with his use of elements of the Bible, Lawrence utilises this text as a frame in which to portray his own spiritual vision, rather than as a platform from which to articulate Christian orthodoxy.

Lawrence first mentions *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in a letter of 1916 to Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry (ii. 544), but he was steeped in the traditions of Bunyan’s Protestantism and would have been familiar with Bunyan in his youth. In a 1907 letter to the Rev. Robert Reid, Lawrence mentions his familiarity with a Congregationalist preacher who drew on Bunyan (i. 40, and n. 3). In *The Boy in the Bush*, Jack Grant may be seen as a latter day pilgrim. Lawrence plants a clue, quite early, that he derived some

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

inspiration from *The Pilgrim's Progress* when the reader is informed that Jack "belonged to Bedford, England" (BB, 8:33). The town's significance in the novel has not been noted by critics to date. Bedford, however, is at the heart of Bunyan territory in England.<sup>21</sup> Given Lawrence's deep familiarity with Bunyan, it is most likely that the reference to Bedford in *The Boy* is an important instance of Lawrence's voice early in the novel, bolstering Paul Eggert's already ample demonstration that Lawrence "made the novel his own" (BB, liii). In addition, therefore, to the inspiration for the character of Jack Grant provided by Mollie Skinner's Australian brother, Jack Skinner (BB, xlix), the reference to Bedford, and therefore Bunyan, suggests a further source. In her biography of Bunyan, Monica Furlong notes that Bunyan experienced his spiritual conversion at Bedford, that "the Bedford Meeting was turned out of the church" on the accession of Charles II in 1660 and that Bunyan was subsequently arrested and thrown into Bedford gaol.<sup>22</sup> Furlong observes that the "spring of his imagination was the Bible,"<sup>23</sup> and that in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan "managed[...]to outline the stages, so important to his theological system, by which a man achieved regeneration."<sup>24</sup> It is this regenerative aspect of Bunyan's novel, with its Christian orthodoxy removed, which also informs Jack's spiritual quest in *The Boy in the Bush*.

Critics have, however, noted the resonance of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Lawrence's world-view and in some of his other novels. Bridget Pugh observes that Lawrence, although in "revolt" against his "Congregationalist roots" (and Christianity as whole, as I have argued) was "pre-eminently a pilgrim in Bunyan's mould" and a "seeker."<sup>25</sup> Keith Sagar sees Lawrence as "in the direct line of English Puritanism," and notes a similarity between the beginning of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Aaron's Rod*.<sup>26</sup> Sagar also observes that *St. Mawr*, which follows *The Boy*, "is a religious quest" and that *The Pilgrim's Progress* "stands most directly behind it."<sup>27</sup> I suggest that Sagar's observation applies even more strongly to *The Boy*. Bunyan's stylistic influence is also

<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to Mr Peter Preston who, in July 2003, in reply to my question about the significance of Bedford to an English reader informed me that John Bunyan came from there.

<sup>22</sup> Monica Furlong, *The Puritan's Progress* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 43, 72-73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> Bridget Pugh, "The Midlands Imagination: Arnold Bennett, George Elliot, William Hale White, D. H. Lawrence," in eds., Peter Preston and Peter Hoare, *D. H. Lawrence in the Modern World* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 155.

<sup>26</sup> Keith Sagar, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence: An Illustrated Biography* (London: Methuen, 1980), 126.

<sup>27</sup> Keith Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 269.

evident in Lawrence's other works. There is, for example, a marked similarity in theme and in language between the passage early in Bunyan's novel, where Christian leaves his family, and some of Lawrence's thoughts on man's spiritual quest in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. Bunyan writes that Christian

began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it began to cry after him to return: but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on crying, 'Life, life, eternal life. So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain.'<sup>28</sup>

Lawrence writes:

For his highest, man is responsible to god alone. He may not pause to remember that he has a life to lose, or a wife and children to leave. He must carry forward the banner of life, though seven worlds perish, with all the wives and mothers and children in them. (*PU*, 129:34-38)

Lawrence, however, makes only passing and largely negative reference to Bunyan and *The Pilgrim's Progress* in his writings, the reason being that the fundamental message of *The Pilgrim's Progress* failed for him. A 1916 letter to Mansfield and Murry in which Lawrence condemns Dostoevsky's novels *The Possessed* and *The Brother's Karamazov* is revealing. "People are not fallen angels, they are merely people," he writes, complaining that "Dostoevsky uses them all as theological or religious units" (ii. 544). Consequently, for Lawrence, such characters are one-dimensional, "bad art, false truth" along with those in "Bunyan's *Pilgrims* [sic] *Progress*" (ii. 544). He again refers to Bunyan's novel in strikingly similar terms in *Apocalypse* (1931), where he writes of its characters as "mere personifications" and for this reason asserts that he "hated, even as a child, allegory" and "could never read *Pilgrim's Progress*" (A, 6), although clearly he was familiar with it. In a commentary on the apocalyptic theme in "Revelation" in the Bible, Lawrence identifies its "meanings behind meanings" and its "meaning against meaning," in contrast to "a meaning, as we can look for a meaning in an allegory like *Pilgrim's Progress*" (P, 294-295).

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<sup>28</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 41.



Lawrence is here also articulating his interest in pluralities rather than in didactic, authorially directed meaning such as is found in Bunyan. Despite Lawrence's criticism of Bunyan, however, there remains a clear debt in much of his work. Keith Sagar observes succinctly that Lawrence saw "Western Civilisation" as Bunyan's "City of Destruction."<sup>29</sup> Lawrence may have thought that *Pilgrim's Progress* was "bad art" (ii. 544), but as Sagar says of *St Mawr*: "Bunyan's images stuck like burrs."<sup>30</sup> Bunyan's "burrs" are also evident in *The Boy*. At the broadest level Jack Grant's quest for spiritual regeneration, can be seen, stripped of its Christian foundation, as a parallel to Christian's search for redemption in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *The Boy*, therefore, is thrice-saturated by the Bible. First in the contested way Wright has documented (and underestimated), second, through the echoes of Bunyan's novel, and finally, because, as Roger Sharrock remarks, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is itself "soaked in the imagery of the Bible."<sup>31</sup>

Despite Lawrence's rejection of his Congregationalist Puritan Christian upbringing, and his stated criticism of Bunyan's novel, the resonances of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Lawrence's work are not surprising. In her study of Bunyan, Monica Furlong, could, with one important qualification, be describing Lawrence himself in her portrait of the Puritan personality:

Deeply alienated from the world and instinctual life, the Puritan compensates himself by an heroic and romantic vision. He sees himself as the central figure in a drama, a drama in which he, the champion of righteousness, fights the dragon of evil.<sup>32</sup>

The qualification, of course, concerns the Puritan's alienation from "instinctual life." It is precisely this alienation which Lawrence saw as a core problem in modern industrial society and sought to redress in his regenerative quest. In the first version of "Spirit of Place" he wrote of the "dangerous negative religious passion of repression" in "Puritanism and Calvinism" which the "Pilgrim Fathers" took to America (*SCAL*, 174:33-36). But Lawrence the artist, critic and essayist, certainly saw himself as a "central figure in a

<sup>29</sup> Sagar, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup> Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art*, p. 269.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Sharrock, "Introduction," *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 23

<sup>32</sup> Furlong, *The Puritan's Progress*, p. 41.

drama,” and contemporary industrial society, embodied in the “London” which “collapsed” in the war (*K*, 216:30-31), equates with the Puritan’s “dragon of evil.”

Roger Sharrock sees English Puritanism as producing a “new type of Englishman, endowed with an earnestness and a sense of mission.”<sup>33</sup> In *The Boy*, Jack’s quest displays this kind of spiritual zeal. Importantly, Lawrence re-shapes *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to suit his purpose, subverting its Christian message. Whereas, as Sharrock observes, for the Puritan Englishman “life was a confrontation between the powers of light and the powers of darkness,”<sup>34</sup> for Lawrence, there is no such confrontation. The two forces are aligned. In *The Boy* the narrator relates that

the two are never separate, life and death. And in the vast dark kingdom of the afterwards, the Lord of Death is the Lord of Life, and the God of Life and Creation is Lord of Death.

But Jack knew his Lord as the Lord of Death. (*BB*, 296:29-32)

So too, does Lawrence invert what Sharrock describes as the Puritan’s “conviction of sin, classically accepted as the first awakening of the soul.”<sup>35</sup> Lawrence re-shapes Bunyan’s message, just as he re-shapes the Bible. Jack Grant’s torment is not that of Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. He does not wish to shed, in Sharrock’s words, “the burden of his original sin.”<sup>36</sup> “Jack was a sinner, a Cain” but “he was not aware of having “sinned”” (*BB*, 10:14, 16). Jack’s belief in the nature of his own regenerative quest precludes received notions of sin. At the end of the novel, Jack defends his desire for Mary as a second wife, with a clever inversion of Puritanism’s non-conformism, and its obsession with sin. Jack laments: “They would all like to kill the non-conforming me. Which is me myself. [...]But[...]I refuse the sin business[...]since I say that my way is better than theirs, and that I should have my two wives” (*BB*, 335:28, 38-40). Lawrence’s rejection of Puritan Christian morality is evident in much of his work. For example, in his study of the ancient Etruscan civilisation he writes that: “To the Puritan all things are impure, as somebody says. And those naughty neighbours of the Romans at least escaped being Puritans” (*MM*, 98). Lawrence also rejected one of the core tenets of Puritanism.

<sup>33</sup> Sharrock, “Introduction,” *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Lawrence, unlike Bunyan and the Puritans, is not drawn to delayed fulfilment in the life hereafter, seeing rather, in Keith Sagar's words, "blessedness[...]in earthly fulfilment, not in any life-denying otherworldly spirituality."<sup>37</sup>

Lawrence, in creating *The Boy*, appears to have been stimulated by a number of thematic elements in Bunyan's novel. Jack's banishment to Australia for the "chivoo" in which his Principal at Agricultural College was injured (*BB*, 20:11, 36), can be likened to Bunyan's incarceration for his religious beliefs. The colonial metropolis of Perth is constructed on "sand[...]thick and fine and soft" and has "pretentious buildings" (*BB*, 26:11-12, 15), and may be equated with Bunyan's general view of civilisation as the City of Destruction, as noted by Sagar. Jack, like Christian in Bunyan's novel, meets people at the beginning of his quest who challenge his resolve and threaten his mission. The colonial Mr George attempts to co-opt Jack, fixes on him as "just the sort" needed in the colony (*BB*, 16:22), oblivious to Jack's own quest, just as Worldly Wiseman attempts to draw Christian to the village of Morality.<sup>38</sup> Easu in *The Boy*, with his "sarcastic, gloating look" (*BB*, 272:13), is grossly sensuous like the Esau of *The Pilgrim's Progress* who "could see no further than to the fulfilling of his lusts."<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding Lawrence's rejection of Bunyan's reliance on characters whom Lawrence dismisses as mere "personifications of qualities" (*A*, 6), there is a strongly Bunyanesque flavour to the symbolic and satirical names of some of the Australian characters in *The Boy*, such as Messrs George, Swallow and Bell, and the drunken British expatriate, Dr Rackett. And, "the faithful Tom" (*BB*, 321:25) is an echo of Christian's companion, Faithful. The parallels do, however, break down. In "The Second Part" of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian's wife, Christiana, undergoes her own pilgrimage. In *The Boy*, however, the principle female characters, Monica and Mary, do not engage in quests of their own. Their lives are essentially a reaction to, or a reflection of, their relation to Jack. Only at the conclusion of the novel, in Hilda Blessington, do we find a woman with a sense of her own independent destiny.

In addition to the shared experience of English Puritanism, there are also some broad biographical parallels between the lives of Bunyan and Lawrence with which Lawrence himself may have identified. Most obviously, both wrote novels in which characters searched for spiritual regeneration and fulfilment. Lawrence and Bunyan each

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<sup>37</sup> Sagar, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 126.

<sup>38</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

suffered for their respective beliefs. During World War I Lawrence was traumatised by the suppression of *The Rainbow*, and, because of suspicions arising from his marriage to a German national, was unable to leave England. He lived in a kind of detention in a country he had come to loathe. Finally, Bunyan wrote at least part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in gaol, separated from his wife and family.<sup>40</sup> And, as I have noted, Lawrence wrote *The Boy in the Bush* during a period of intense spiritual anxiety while separated from his wife, Frieda.

### *The Boy's Travels*

Eugene Goodheart in his *Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* identifies an overarching utopianism in a misanthropic Lawrence, seeing Lawrence as “oriented toward the future,” and that his “utopianism is revolutionary,” as well as being “one of the great instances of the English Protestant imagination.”<sup>41</sup> Goodheart sees Lawrence’s social reaction as being beyond the immediately modern and industrial, and identifies in Lawrence a kinship with earlier misanthropes, Jonathan Swift and Nietzsche.<sup>42</sup> He dismisses Raymond Williams’s assertion that Lawrence ““was rejecting, not the claims of society, but the claims of industrial society,””<sup>43</sup> as too narrow, and as “mistakenly” placing Lawrence in a “tradition” of nineteenth-century authors such as William Morris.<sup>44</sup> “The industrial organisation of society merely exposed its generic mechanical character,” Goodheart observes, and Lawrence, therefore, is in “constant sensitive reaction against the thousand subtle ways in which society seeks to establish its precedence in human life.”<sup>45</sup> Lawrence was indeed familiar with the long tradition of English utopianism, beyond its nineteenth-century manifestations, notably *Gulliver's Travels*. In 1908, in a letter to Blanche Jennings, he lampooned a flattering photograph of himself, quipping: “anyone would think I were an Erewhonian” (i. 100), an ironic reference to Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (i. 100 note 3), and thereby distanced himself from nineteenth-century utopians. In a complementary review of *The Peep Show* by Walter Wilkinson, Lawrence referred, with gentle, arguably self-

<sup>40</sup> Sharrock, “Introduction,” *The Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>41</sup> Eugene Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond Williams in Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

referential irony, to the protagonist as “a nice young man who had enjoyed William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*,” adding, however, that “the whole Morris aspect of life is amateur” (*P*, 372-373). These references support Goodheart’s proposition. And his proposition that Lawrence’s disaffection with society was more far-reaching than that represented by contemporary industrial society alone, is right. Although Lawrence directly critiques industrial society in many of his novels, his vision extends far beyond the replacement of industrially driven modes of living. It is relationships which are of paramount importance, albeit that they are strongly influenced by social conditions and conditioning. And *The Boy* contests late nineteenth-century British colonial society in Western Australia, which was not predicated on industry. Goodheart, however, despite his stated intention to rehabilitate the neglected novels of Lawrence’s “troubled middle period,” excludes *The Boy in the Bush* from his analysis of the utopian in Lawrence.<sup>46</sup>

I have briefly mentioned Goodheart’s linking of Lawrence’s work generally with Jonathan Swift. Although not remarked upon by Goodheart, there are clear resonances of *Gulliver’s Travels* in *The Boy in the Bush*. Lemuel Gulliver, during his travels in “Lewins Land,” may be seen as a heroic and regenerative presence in *The Boy*. Lawrence’s generally high regard for Swift can be gauged from his rejection of an offer by his English publisher, Martin Secker, to translate the work of a contemporary Italian, Riccardo Bacchelli, whom he found “amateurish” (v. 562). “This kind of satire,” Lawrence wrote, “the would-be Swiftian, has to be very good if it’s going to amount to anything” (v. 562). In *The Boy*, Lawrence displays Swiftian satire, notably in the first chapter, where the colonials Messrs Bell, George and Swallow “in their shabby clothes” recount absurdly the origins of the colony under the “King of Groperland” (*BB*, 16:34,40), and its subsequent “wonderful advancement” (*BB*, 22:33). Swift is overtly referenced in the chapter “New Year’s Eve,” where Tom Ellis informs Jack that, because of the extensive celebrations, they will be turned out of their accommodation on the farm at Wandoo, in favour of a mish-mash of guests. “Yahoos anywhere, and the ladies always bag our cubby,” Tom remarks (*BB*, 112:8-9). The contrast between Jack and the “coarse, swivel-eyed” Easu is also partially Swiftian (*BB*, 66:17). Lawrence, in effect, casts Jack, the Englishman, as a noble Houyhnhnm, and Easu, the colonial Australian, as an archetypal Yahoo. At the dance, Easu Ellis gives Jack “a clean clear kick on the shin,” feeding an animosity which will

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

result in their eventual deadly encounter (*BB*, 127:19). In his subsequent travels in the outback, Jack witnesses a fight involving “a big yahoo of a bushman” with “unnatural long arms” who when angered was “snarling like a gorilla” (*BB*, 203:14-15, 20). Swift’s Yahoos are beasts in the shape of men and Lawrence endows the Australian bushman with Swiftian unhuman roughness as well as Simian qualities. This enables Lawrence to draw a neat polarity between a degenerate Australianness and Jack’s subsequent affirmation of regenerated Englishness, later in the chapter “Jamboree.” Ian Higgins describes *Gulliver’s Travels* as not only “a general satire on institutional and individual corruption with topical polemical resonance at the time of publication,” but also as “a profoundly disaffected and extremist work.”<sup>47</sup> Lawrence’s entire regenerative quest may be seen as similarly motivated by extreme disaffection with any form of society. In “The Nightmare” in *Kangaroo*, Richard Somers (and clearly Lawrence), denounces the “tortures” of “the *John Bull* government of mid World War I,” British society, and “the military buffers” who “looked into his anus” (*K*, 214:14, 13; 252:38; 256:15). Somers’s disaffection is summed up when he reflects that in Australia, he feels “again that queer revulsion from the English form of democracy” (*K*, 260:17-18). In *The Boy*, Jack, his vision of new community with Mary thwarted reflects: “She was a piece of the upholstered world. Damn the upholstered world. He would go back to the goldfields” (*BB*, 333:19-21). It is clear, however, from one of Lawrence’s later observations on Swift, that he did not share what he saw as Swift’s somewhat morbid scatological fixation.<sup>48</sup>

The utopian aspects of *Gulliver’s Travels*, and its partial location in the antipodes in the vicinity of southern Western Australia, also resonate in *The Boy*. Swift commences his novel with “A Letter from Capt. Gulliver, to his cousin Sympson,” in which Gulliver references William Dampier’s voyages, which encompassed New Holland, as Australia was then known, before going on to report (tongue-in-cheek) that there are those who “have gone so far as to drop hints, that the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos have no more existence than the inhabitants of Utopia.”<sup>49</sup> A partially fictitious map at the commencement of Part IV

<sup>47</sup> Ian Higgins, *Swift’s Politics: A Study in Disaffection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 154, 171.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence wrote: “Think of poor Swift’s insane *But* of horror at the end of every verse of that poem to Celia—But Celia shits! — You see the very fact that it should horrify him, and simply devastate his consciousness, is all wrong, and a bitter shame to poor Celia” (vii. 106).

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, “Introduction,” by Harold Williams (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941), pp. xxxiii, xxxvi.

depicts “Lewins Land” around the area now known as Cape Leeuwin, Western Australia.<sup>50</sup> Gulliver, after leaving the Houyhnhnms, arrives at “the South-East point of New Holland” preferring to live among the native “*barbarians*” rather than “European Yahoos.”<sup>51</sup> Jack Grant, also an English adventurer, begins his utopian quest in the south-west of Western Australia, becoming familiar with the country to the east of Perth. However, whereas Swift’s “European Yahoos” do not inhabit New Holland,<sup>52</sup> Lawrence’s “Yahoos” are the motley Australian colonial rabble which will descend on Wandoo for the New Year’s Eve party (*BB*, 112:8-9). This is an example of Lawrence reworking text, although importantly, he preserves Swift’s polarity between yahoos and humans, since it serves his own vision of the tension between imperial English and Australian colonial values. While as Paul Eggert notes, the geography of *The Boy* is anchored in the initial landscape of Mollie Skinner’s lost “The House of Ellis” (*BB*, 393), it is also likely that while reading Skinner’s text Lawrence was stimulated by his recall of the locale of part of *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Eugene Goodheart does report a Swiftian resonance in Lawrence’s subsequent novel *St. Mawr* (1925), which I will discuss in the next chapter, and this alerts us to another Swiftian element in *The Boy*. Goodheart observes that “Lawrence’s attempt to conceive a horse as a character recalls Swift’s conception of the Houyhnhnms in *Gulliver’s Travels*,” thereby “employing the traditional view of the horse as noble.”<sup>53</sup> While there are no noble horse characters in *The Boy*, Jack’s mystical relation with the horse Stampede is founded upon his respect for the animal’s essential nobility. When he is set-up by the brutish colonial Australian Easu to ride the erstwhile uncontrollable Stampede, we learn:

He did not believe in the innate viciousness of the horse. He never believed in the innate viciousness of anything, except man. And he did not want to fight the horse for simple mastery. He wanted just to hold it hard with his legs until it soothed down a little, and he and it could come to an understanding. (*BB*, 67:9-13)

Jack astounds his onlookers by bringing the horse in without incident and in Stampede Lawrence evokes, in germinal form, the later more completely rendered animal, *St. Mawr*,

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 268, 269.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>53</sup> Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence*, pp. 58-59.

in which Swift's idealised equine Houyhnhnm attributes are more fully realised. At the conclusion of the novel, Jack's horse becomes a symbol of his utopian quest, through its association with classical mythology. As Jack rides alone in the bush, away from humanity in Perth, he and his horse "made a sort of centaur" (*BB*, 339:29). The centaur also suggests a continuing link with Swift in the novel, recalling the equine Houyhnhnms in *Gulliver's Travels*, although these creatures, Lawrence asserts in "The London Letter," which Lawrence wrote around the time he was writing the final chapter of *The Boy*, "aren't blue enough" (*MM II*, 138:7-8) – they are not sufficiently horse-like. In the explicitly regenerative scene where Jack meets the fearless and beautiful Hilda Blessington at an inn, his stallion breaks free to join with her mare (*BB*, 343:13-20). "It's like the sun mating with the moon" (*BB*, 347:23-24), Hilda remarks to Jack, continuing the image of non-human union. Ian Higgins observes that in *Gulliver's Travels*, "the idyllic order of those equine Ancients, the Houyhnhnms, is unattainable."<sup>54</sup> After Jack takes leave of Hilda, despite their promise to meet, we are left with the strong sense that their relationship is similarly unattainable. Jack, the narrator tells us, believes that the prospect of a union with Hilda is "a real, unexpected joke" (*BB*, 347:35-36).

### *The (Cow)boy in the Bush*

L. D. Clark, as well as noting the importance of Lawrence's criticism of American literature, represented by *Studies in Classical American Literature* (1923), points to the significance of American literature in Lawrence's own work.<sup>55</sup> Lawrence, in his Foreword to *Studies*, alludes to "the truth" of Hawthorne, Poe, Dana, Melville and Whitman (*SCAL*, 12: 19, 3). "The old American literature" of "Franklin, Cooper, Hawthorn & Co.," Lawrence believed, showed the way forward, not the modern "reality" of "tinned meat, Charlie Chaplin, water taps, and World Salvation" (*SCAL*, 11: 22, 24-25). American literature has "a new voice" and "a new feeling," he wrote (*SCAL*, 13:16, 27). Although first written between 1917 and 1919 in England, Lawrence was moved to extensively re-write *Studies* at the end of 1922, soon after his arrival at Taos, New Mexico from Australia (*SCAL*, xxiii; lxx).

<sup>54</sup> Higgins, *Swift's Politics*, p. 196.

<sup>55</sup> Clarke, "Making the Classic Contemporary," p. 193.



Clark locates *The Boy in the Bush* in the tradition of American literature and sees *The Boy* as his “most Cooperesque tale,” as well as arguing, somewhat over zealously, that the novel displays “many characteristics of American romance as that genre expanded into popular regions of the American western novel and the western movie.”<sup>56</sup> Although enthralled by Cooper, Lawrence did not miss the incongruity of a man who lived in “a Louis Quatorze *hôtel* in Paris, lying looking up at the painted ceiling, dreaming passionately of the naked savages” of the “American backwoods” (*SCAL*, 216:17-19, 21). Clark notes that the “leadership-brotherhood or unison of purpose, which Lawrence encountered [in] Cooper’s Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook as well Melville’s Ishmael and Queequeg, is one of [Lawrence’s] greatest debts to American romance.”<sup>57</sup> Jack and Tom are similarly paired in *The Boy*, and Clark notes that Tom is Jack’s “soul mate.”<sup>58</sup> Their relationship is particularly well developed in Chapter VII and Chapters XXIII-XVII and is closer to Cooper than even Clark observes. This is because their relationship, like that of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, displays elements of pseudo racial differentiation. Jack is English and Tom, like his fellow Australians, is a colonial “other.” Lawrence asks in *Studies*: “What did Cooper dream beyond democracy? Why, in his immortal friendship of Chingachgook and Natty Bumppo he dreamed the nucleus of a new society” founded on the “unison of two men” (*SCAL*, 58:13-16). Lawrence gives later expression to this regenerative vision in *The Boy*. The brotherhood established between Jack and Tom early in the novel is exclusive of, and paramount to, Jack’s relationship with women. Thus Monica expresses her frustration at Jack’s competing relationship with Tom. ““Let brotherly love continue,”” she quips, “spitefully,” adding, ““wonder if it will, even unto Camp” (*BB*, 91: 25-26). During their journey together, Jack and Tom establish an exclusive, if transient, domestic society, Cooper’s “new society.” Jack is “absolutely happy, in camp with Tom” and “with a couple of axes and a jack-knife they built a house fit for a-savage-king” (*BB*, 92: 4, 94: 18-19). Later, rather than pursue his relationship with Monica, he chooses to follow the “orders” of Mr George and Mrs Ellis, and travel with Tom to a remote “sheep station up north” (*BB*, 193: 2, 4). At the point of departure Jack does not “look round at her,” and is “glad to be going” from the “doom” of Wandoo (*BB*, 194: 29-31, 38). The primacy of Jack’s relationship with Tom, therefore, is asserted.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-205.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

For both Lawrence and Cooper untouched nature is a regenerative force which counters the degenerative effects of civilisation. Lawrence wrote: "Probably, one day America will be as beautiful in actuality as it is in Cooper. Not yet, however. When the factories have fallen down again" (*SCAL*, 56:5-6). In Australia, Lawrence found some of this beauty. Jack and Tom leave the human shaped environment of the farm and ride together into an Edenic Australian bush:

The dark forest of karri that ran to the left of Wandoo, away on the distant horizon, cut a dark pattern on the egg-green sky. Goodbye! Goodbye to it! The sown fields they were riding through glittered with tender blades of wheat. Goodbye! Goodbye! Somebody else would reap it. The bush was now full of sparks of the beautiful uncanny flowers of Western Australia, and bright birds started and flew. Sombre the bush was in itself, but out of the heavy dullness came sharp, scarlet flame-spark flowers, and flowers as lambent gold as sunset, and wan white flowers, and flowers of a strange, darkish rich blue, like the vault of heaven just after sundown. The scent of rain, of eucalyptus, and of the strange brown-green shrubs of the bush! (*BB*, 195:5-16)

Gradually, the egalitarian brotherhood between Jack and Tom dissolves in the face of Jack's quest for mastery. At the start of their second journey, Tom rides "ahead" and Jack is "glad when Tom called a halt" (*BB*, 195: 17, 30-31). By the end of the jamboree, however, Jack has experienced his revelatory affirmation of his superior Englishness, and it is he who commands Tom. "He was master. He was real Englishman" (*BB*, 209:6-7).

Clark, having regard to Lawrence's hope that *The Boy* might be "popular" (*iv*. 517), in addition to noting that with *The Boy* "Lawrence meant an adventure story in emulation of Cooper," also suggests that Lawrence was influenced by contemporary popular authors, including the western novelist Zane Grey.<sup>59</sup> Clark describes Jack as a "cowboy hero[... ]very much with the horse, and with a few Lawrence extremes laid on" and suggests that Jack's duel-like counter with Easu occurs "in the spirit of a shootout on a cowtown street."<sup>60</sup> Clark sees "the many connections between *The Boy in the Bush* and the

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

American romance in the western movie/western novel form” as more apparent today than when Lawrence was writing, implying that Lawrence would not necessarily have been aware of this link.<sup>61</sup> Another American critic, Judith Ruderman, sees a similar connection with *The Boy*, noting that Jack is “like a centaur,” and that “as in most cowboy stories, of which this is one, the hero establishes a closer relationship with his horse than with his women (or woman).”<sup>62</sup> But is Jack Grant really a cowboy hero? I have already discussed another relation between Jack and his horse in the context of Swift. It is useful, therefore, to briefly examine the evolution and nature of the western or cowboy novel. In his “Introduction” to *The Literary West*, Thomas J. Lyon notes that the American western literature made popular by Prentiss Ingraham’s prolific Buffalo Bill novels, “he published nine in 1892 alone,” Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey’s *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), “depicted a simplified and heroic West,” and “the spacious freedom of the wild frontier.”<sup>63</sup> Don D. Walker points to the significance of *The Virginian* noting that “it is perhaps true, as Russell Nye observes, that Wister ‘invented’ the cowboy – if one means that he gave him literary seriousness.”<sup>64</sup> Walker’s study is largely historiographical, but he also traverses the literary landscape of the cowboy novel, testing assertions of authenticity, and demonstrating the complexity and breadth of the genre. Walker notes, for example, that in Douglas Branch’s “prejudiced” 1926 critique of the cowboy in literature, “negative judgements” of *The Virginian* point out that “there are no cows in the story” and that “the Virginian is not a type,” and that the heroine is out of place.<sup>65</sup> In other words, even *The Virginian* has been seen as not a “real” cowboy novel. For quite different reasons, I suggest that *The Boy* is not cowboy novel. At first glance, *The Boy*, albeit written by an Englishman, and set in Australia, does display a range of features commonly associated with cowboy literature. Jack Grant is a competent horseman who works on frontier grazing properties in Australia’s wild “west,” in Western Australia in the 1880s, and he shoots the evil Easu in a duel-like encounter. Jack’s demonstration of “sensual mastery” of the dangerous horse “Stampede,” (*BB*, 67:29, 23), may also be seen as a gesture towards the western novel. And certainly, Lawrence was familiar with the idea of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ruderman, *The Devouring Mother*, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas J. Lyon, *The Literary West: An Anthology of Western American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Don D. Walker, *Clio’s Cowboys: Studies in the Historiography of the Cattle Trade* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 114.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

the cowboy, and saw some resonance in Australia. In *Kangaroo*, the American West is evoked in Australia when Somers sees “long men in jerseys and white kerchiefs round their necks à la Buffalo Bill” (*K*, 275:15). More revealing, however, is the visit by Somers and his wife to the local library at Mullumbimby and their reactions to its offerings of popular and western literature:

Four rows of novels: the top row a hundred or more thin books, all Nat Gould or Zane Grey. The young women came for Zane Grey—“Oh, the Maid of Mudgee is a lovely thing, lovely”—a young woman was pronouncing[... .] ‘Y’aven’t got a new Zain Greye, have yer?’ (*K*, 190:14-19)

Lawrence’s satirical reproduction of the broad Australian accent points to his dumbing-down of the Australian woman, and by inference the cowboy literature of Zane Grey which she seeks to read. And Bruce Steele suggests that Lawrence “perhaps parodies Grey’s style for titles” with the reference to the “Maid of Mudgee” (*K*, 391).<sup>66</sup> Somers’s observation is double edged. He declares: “I don’t wonder they can’t read English books” since “all the emotions and the regrets in English novels do seem a waste of time out here” (*K*, 190:25-27), indicating that Australians are both unable to grasp old-world concerns, but free of them as well.

Once in America, Lawrence was explicit in his dismissal of what he saw as the invention of the cowboy and the west. In “Indians and an Englishman,” published in the *Dial* in February 1923 (*DG*, 547), before he commenced work on *The Boy* Lawrence impliedly includes cowboys as part of “the comic opera played with solemn intensity” amidst the absurdity of “all the wildness and wooliness and westernity” of the society he found in New Mexico (*P*, 92, 94). More savagely, in his review of Stuart P. Sherman’s *Americans*, published in the *Dial* in May 1923 (*DG*, 547), he wrote that “the Wild West is a pose that pays Zane Grey today, as it once paid [Joaquin] Miller and Bret Harte and Buffalo Bill” (*P*, 320). The reality of the fictional and the “real” west, therefore, were all a great disappointment to Lawrence who once described himself as “born in England and kindled with Fenimore Cooper” (*P*, 94). In “Indians and Entertainment” Lawrence writes: “You’ve

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<sup>66</sup> Zane Grey was prolific at this time and published three novels in 1922, the year Lawrence was at Thirroul.

got to de-bunk the Indians, as you've got to de-bunk the Cowboy. When you've de-bunked the Cowboy, there's not much left" (*MM*, 54). This essay was sent for publication on 20 April 1924, after Lawrence had completed *The Boy* (*DG*, 179). In *The Boy*, however, in the character of Jack Grant, Lawrence begins his de-bunking of the cowboy, later realised in his essay. *The Boy* is not a cowboy novel, true to type, as Clark and Ruderman assert and, perhaps for this reason, was not as popular as Lawrence had hoped. Despite the novel's western literary and cowboy referents, Lawrence's subverts and contests the genre, in much the same way that he does the Bible. The result is that Jack Grant is an anti-cowboy, and an anti-hero. His progress in the novel, where it engages cowboy images, is marked by the careful avoidance of any emulation of the traditional, fictional cowboy hero. Lawrence dangles the possibility of the cowboy genre before us, at the same time, subverting it and conjuring up entirely different archetypes. Here is Jack Grant after his success with gold in the north-west and before his rejection by Mary:

He was already a rich man and notorious in the colony. He rode with two pistols in his belt, and that unchanging aloof look in his face. But he carried himself with pride, rode a good horse, wore well-made riding breeches and a fine bandanna hand-kerchief loose around his neck, and looked, with a silver-studded band round his broad felt hat, a mixture of gold-miner, a gentleman settler, and a bandit chief. Perhaps he felt a mixture of them all. (*BB*, 312:21-28)

Jack is a truly created and fanciful concoction, rather than a type. Part "gold miner," and part "bandit" and also a "gentleman." He is anything but a "true" cowboy. Rather, Jack is in a wild Lawrentian fancy dress.

A closer examination of Jack's encounter with Easu reveals that it is only superficially a western style shootout, in the manner, for example, which occurs in the climax to *The Virginian*. Certainly Jack uses a gun, but his shooting Easu in "the mystic place in Easu's forehead" introduces, as I have mentioned, an element of Eastern, yogic philosophy (*BB*, 281:21, 425). Easu's charging Jack on horseback, after Easu has, somewhat improbably, hurled an axe, further destabilises cowboy conventions, and invoking instead a kind of parody of a medieval tournament (*BB*, 281: 24-25). Importantly, Lawrence engages the polarities associated with the American west, and asserts the bush

over the metropolitan and pastoral life of the colony. Thomas Lyon observes in his "Introduction" to *The Literary West*, that the west "is everything the over-civilised East, or Europe, is not."<sup>67</sup> Lyon also observes, however, that the west in the novels by authors such as Wister and Grey is typified by "a hero who can somehow live beautifully in both the wild world and the civilised one to come", and who possesses an "unerring morality."<sup>68</sup> Lyon notes, for example, that in *The Virginian* the hero is a united figure, he eventually becomes "a capitalist."<sup>69</sup> But Lawrence is wary of conventional heroics. In *The Boy*, Jack "was something of a hero" and "wanted to be a hero," but is "no hero" in the eyes of the conventional Aunt Matilda (*BB*, 314:22-24). Jack's "fidelity" to "the living spark" contravenes the "automatic fidelity" represented by Aunt Matilda, and also represents an unconventional heroic (*BB*, 315:16-17). Consequently, Jack is absolutely unable to span both worlds, in the manner which Lyon describes. After Mary's rejection of his bigamous offer Jack associates her values with the repressed and hypocritical civilised world: "She was a piece of the upholstered world. Damn the upholstered world! He would go back to the goldfields," the narrator informs us (*BB*, 333:19-21). Jack cannot abide civilised society. He is "like an enemy lurking outside the great Camp of civilisation" (*BB*, 231: 10-11). He is implacably opposed to the colonial life of Perth, "the foolish complacency" and "popular goodness" which it represents (*BB*, 319:10, 24). He seeks the "element of wildness" in the camp in the North-West (*BB*, 333:9). Yet he is also disillusioned with the community offered by Monica, Tom and Lennie. "He didn't really want his fellow-men" and they "knew the absoluteness of his repudiation of "mankind" (*BB*, 340:22-24, 37-38). Importantly, as I discussed in chapter 9, Jack's marriage to Monica fails to provide him with complete fulfilment. Lawrence, therefore, also departs from what John Seelye calls Owen Wister's "archetypal action" in *The Virginian*, whereby Wister distanced himself from Cooper's Leatherstocking model and "set the stage for countless novel and cinema re-enactments of the final dual[...], often followed by a marriage signifying the subsequent establishment of civilised community."<sup>70</sup> Notably, Wister dedicated his novel to Theodore Roosevelt and shared his regenerative vision of an "Anglo-Saxon empire."<sup>71</sup> This was not Lawrence's vision, and we should not be surprised, therefore, to find Lawrence departing

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<sup>67</sup> Lyon, *The Literary West*, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> John Seelye, "Introduction," *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains*, by Owen Wister (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), p. xx.

<sup>71</sup> Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 156.

from the kind of heroics which support this vision. Although Jack's marriage to Monica following his duel with Easu bears some relation to Wister's "archetypal action," Monica cannot be equated with the virtuous school teacher who marries and civilises the Virginian. Monica remains partly "repulsive" to Jack because of her past sexual relationship with Easu (*BB*, 283:23), and Jack's marriage to her does not throw a bridge between his frontier wanderings and yearnings, and the civilised life of the metropolis in Perth. Seelye observes that Cooper "realised the impossibility of his hero's ever marrying."<sup>72</sup> *The Boy*, therefore, while being "Cooperesque," as Clark asserts, in terms of the relation between Jack and Tom, is not so in its vision of a regenerative plural marriage. The final characteristic of the western hero, and perhaps the most significant to be "de-bunked" by Lawrence, is "the unerring morality" identified by Lyon. Jack Grant's discovery of a new "spiritual body" in Australia where "he had seen another sun and another moon," is part of "what made him want to kill Easu" (*BB*, 176:3-4, 11, 15). This affirmation of the "rightness" of Jack's *wanting* to kill Easu, I suggest, marks his morality out from that of a conventional romantic cowboy hero. Jack believes that "he had done a supremely good thing" although at the same time it is in self defence (*BB*, 297: 4-10). In addition, his aspiring to be an omnipotent "Lord of Death" (*BB*, 218:20) before killing Easu, and his sense of achieving this status afterwards, asserts a new morality, over the conventional Christian morality which is upheld in the cowboy novel.

Having completed the bulk of *The Boy in the Bush* in America, Lawrence returned to London. His attitude to the fictional west is revealed in his reaction to a Hollywood evocation, as reported by Dorothy Brett, who later accompanied Lawrence and Frieda back to New Mexico:

All through the grey days in London you longed for New Mexico. And then the moving picture of "The Covered Wagon" came to the Strand; so we must all of us go; and Kot, Gertler, Murry and I meet you there one afternoon. I am sitting next to you in that long, dark movie house. You are tense with excitement, and we are all infected by your love for the West. You snort at the smart cowboy, in his white shirt, white pants, black cowboy boots and big white Stetson. He irritates you, and you feel

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<sup>72</sup> Seelye, "Introduction," *The Virginian*, p. xx.

sure he has never sat on a horse. The house darkens again, and then a spotlight falls onto the stage; seven real Red Indians are supposed to walk on before the movie begins.

The light fades down and "The Covered Wagon" begins. You are watching it, as if you are part of it yourself. "How like it is, how like it is," you keep on saying[...].<sup>73</sup>

Brett's recollection of Lawrence's irritation at the movie image of the west, and his: "How like it is," indicates that Lawrence saw the west as an invention, perpetuated in movies. But both Brett and Lawrence enjoyed fancy dress, and could not resist the allure of western outfits in America. Dorothy Brett, the only member of Lawrence's "Rananim" in New Mexico, from time to time affected cowboy dress,<sup>74</sup> and painted a portrait of Lawrence in cowboy garb. And Lawrence, in his first couple of months in America, in November 1922, wrote that he was excited about his cowboy outfit. He told his American agent somewhat theatrically: "I actually wildly bought a pair [of] Justins Cowboy boots – 20 dollars but *very* nice. You should see me – cowboy hat, good one, \$5: sheepskin coat – \$12.50 – corduroy riding-breeches, very nice, \$5" (iv. 336). No doubt he excused himself this "pose," which he condemned so utterly in Zane Grey and others.

### *Aristocrat in the Bush*

*The Boy in the Bush* can also be seen as an example of what Martin Green identifies as "inversions of the frontiersman adventure," which include the ironic productions of Mark Twain.<sup>75</sup> Green amply demonstrates that there were also "other white frontiers besides the American," a range of "subgenres" of "British Empire variants" to the American frontier story.<sup>76</sup> Green, however, in seeing Lawrence as primarily an "erotic" writer,<sup>77</sup> overlooks Lawrence's contribution to adventure fiction, and the contribution of *The Boy in the Bush* to the "sub-genres" he identifies. As Robert Dixon shows, there is an extensive body of

<sup>73</sup> Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 2, pp. 307-308.

<sup>74</sup> Sean Hignett, *Brett: From Bloomsbury to New Mexico. A Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984). Hignett reproduces a photograph of Dorothy Brett dressed as a cowgirl, pp. 96-97.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 117.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 112.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



Anglo-Australian popular adventure fiction,<sup>78</sup> which pre-dates Lawrence's novel. Notwithstanding its debt to American literature, and its having been written in America, *The Boy* displays evidence of Lawrence's wide reading of English adventure fiction. Lawrence refers to Marryat, Ballantyne and Stevenson (ii. 588), as well as Haggard's African frontier novel *She* in *Kangaroo* (K, 132:8), as already noted. Somers's initials "R. L." in *Kangaroo* (K, 10: 8), probably echo Stevenson (K, 361), and Jack's experience of feeling a "Crusoe solitary confinement" (BB, 40: 5) in England before coming to Australia, attest to Lawrence's absorption of this long and varied tradition in English literature. In Australian literature, it appears that Lawrence's undertaking to return "Bush Stories" to Edward Garnett, refers to Henry Lawson's *Children of the Bush* (1902) (i. 376, and note 1), but although there is no evidence, the reference could also refer to Barbara Baynton's *Bush Studies* (1902). I have also noted the importance of Grant Watson's novel *Where Bonds Are Loosed*. Lawrence mentions "Ralph Boldrewood" (sic) in a list of children's stories with which he was familiar (ii. 588), and in all likelihood Lawrence read *Robbery Under Arms* (1888), which was Boldrewood's "best known" work.<sup>79</sup> This novel portrays the life of Dick Marston, cattle-duffer and bushranger. Lawrence would have read that Marston's father was one of "the Government men, as the convicts were always called," was "an Englishman" as well as "a born bushman," and that Marston and his brother Jim eschew the settled and prudent farm life to which their neighbour, George Storefield aspires.<sup>80</sup> In *The Boy*, Fremantle's convict past is clearly evoked at the beginning of the novel, the bushranging period forms part of the colony's recent history, and Jack Grant looks to the wild north-west rather than farm life at Wandoo (BB, 10:2-7, 7: 29). Lawrence's recollections of Boldrewood's descriptions of Australian bush life in the 1880s could have assisted his own evocations in *The Boy* of this period. Importantly, Lawrence's novel is not the cautionary tale that Boldrewood's is.

While there are, therefore, many influences on Jack Grant's regenerative quest, the mature Jack, "born again" after his contest with Easu (BB, 291:16), is ultimately a uniquely Lawrentian type. Jack's re-birth, his regeneration, is as a Lawrentian aristocrat. Jack seeks not to vanquish villains but to realise a new consciousness and a new way of living. This is

<sup>78</sup> See Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Webby, "Colonial Writers and Readers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Webby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 63.

<sup>80</sup> Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, pp. 33, 34, 43-44.

exemplified by the language used by the narrator in reporting Jack's desire to seek his fortune and make a new life in the north-west of Western Australia. Jack "wanted to make a place on earth for a few aristocrats-to-the-bone. He wanted to conquer the world" (*BB*, 308:12-13). Thus, when Jack discovers gold, it is not simply the naked ore he finds, but "the river of the wealth of the world," symbolising the earth's consciousness and vitality, and he rejoices that "there would be a place on earth for the lords of death," the Lawrentian aristocrats (*BB*, 308:22; 309:37). Lawrence's vision here is bound to what Keith Sagar terms his "unkillable dream of Rananim."<sup>81</sup> The nexus between Rananim and Lawrentian aristocracy is apparent if we consider two letters written on 3 July 1915, in which Lawrence reminded Koteliansky of their "Rananim" and told Lady Ottoline Morrell that "life itself is an affair of aristocrats" (*ii*. 252, 254). And, as Lawrence confided to Russell a few months later, an improved society is not based on democracy but on "an aristocracy of people who have wisdom" (*ii*. 364). In his *Movements in European History*, Lawrence writes that Europe must choose a "hero who can lead a great war, as well as administer a wide peace," who "must be chosen, but at the same time [is] responsible to God alone" (*MEH*, 344). This aristocratic vision is a persistent theme in his questing novels. In *Kangaroo*, Somers, in democratic Australia, appalled at "the soft, oh-so-friendly life, informs his wife: "You've got to have an awakening of the old recognition of the aristocratic principle, the *innate* difference between people" (*K*, 277:13-15). Somers rejects the two rival Australian leaders, Kangaroo and Struthers, because neither recognises this "principle." They are not Lawrentian aristocrats but mere functionaries, "all the time yoked to some work[...]all the time in the collar" (*K*, 346:1-2). In *Quetzalcoatl*, written between *Kangaroo* and *The Boy*, Don Ramon who "had once believed in Liberty and Education" believes that "a new aristocracy" in the future lies with "people of insight and education" (*Q*, 246, 247). Don Ramon states:

This means a new aristocracy. An aristocracy of the soul, not of birth or money. An esoteric, united aristocracy of the world. Chosen in the honest religious spirit, and no other. Self elected because of honest righteousness. And electing others for the same. (*Q*, 247)

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<sup>81</sup> Sagar, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 135.

In *The Plumed Serpent*, the later Don Ramon says to Cipriano:

I would like...to be one of the Initiates of the Earth. One of the Initiators. Every country its own Saviour, Cipriano: or every people its own Saviour. And the first men of every people, forming a Natural Aristocracy of the World. One must have aristocrats, that we know. But natural ones, not artificial. (*PS*, 248: 9-13)

Lawrence subsequently devoted an entire essay to his vision of aristocracy. "Aristocracy of birth is bunk," Lawrence writes in "Aristocracy," between July and August 1925 (*DG*, 552), rather "there is *natural* aristocracy" (*P II*, 477). This, somewhat obscurely, involves the attainment or awareness of union with the life force, symbolised by the sun. "The sun makes man a lord: an aristocrat: almost a deity" and "the man who can touch both sun and night[...]becomes a lord" (*P II*, 483). This is very much Jack Grant, the Lord of Death. Lawrence submits that certain historical figures, both military, such as Peter the Great, and artistic, such as Shelley, were aristocrats because they "established a *new* connection between mankind and the universe" (*P II*, 478). Uncharacteristically, Lawrence employs a Social Darwinian hierarchy in the essay. He begins "Aristocracy" with an exposition of the putative hierarchies in the natural world. "We have to assume that a daisy is more highly developed than a fern, even if it be a tree-fern" he asserts. "The daisy belongs to a higher order of life. That is the daisy is more alive. The fern more torpid (*P II*, 475). This hierarchy is foregrounded in *Kangaroo* where Somers feels "the torpor coming over him" in the Australian bush, with its "ancient flat-topped tree-ferns," and Jack Callcott's Australian wife, Victoria, has at bottom "the twilight indifference of the fern-world" (*K*, 178:16, 4; 179:25). As a consequence, that novel asserts that the "aristocratic principle" cannot thrive in a retrograde Australia (*K*, 277:15).

While *The Boy* articulates the possibility of Lawrentian vision of aristocracy, its realisation, like *Rananim*, is problematic. Jack's discovery of gold means that "there would be a place on earth for the lords of death" (*BB*, 309:37-38), and his playing "the General" amongst the community of Monica, their twins and Tom and Lennie (*BB*, 310:7), points to some potential for the achievement of his regenerative aristocratic expectations, but ultimately, these are not realised at the conclusion of the novel.

Judith Ruderman writes that *The Boy*

should actually be called *The Man in the Bush*, thematically if not euphoniously, for the point of it all is that Jack Grant, the protagonist, matures from boyhood to manhood by going through the crucible of experience in the outback.<sup>82</sup>

*The Boy*, therefore, may also be characterised as a bildungsroman. After Jack's ordeal with Easu, and his subsequent wanderings in the bush, the narrator reports: "The boy Jack never rose from that fever. It was a man who got up again. A man with all the boyishness cut away from him" (*BB*, 295: 4-5). Lawrence wrote of his own difficult transition to adulthood which he saw as occurring in his first year of college. "It is a frightful experience to grow up, I think, it hurts horribly; but when you have got over it, it is delightful" (*i.* 72), he wrote. Jack Grant may also be seen as a fictional embodiment of Lawrence's "experience," and as a character, who like Lawrence, is moved to seek beyond that experience, and shape his own future.

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<sup>82</sup> Ruderman, *D. H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother*, p. 115.

## 11. ST. MAWR: AUSTRALIANS INVADE ENGLAND

Lawrence wrote *St. Mawr* in America in the summer of 1924. Only a few months earlier, on 3 March 1924, he had informed Mollie Skinner that their Australian novel *The Boy in the Bush*, “is in the printer’s hands” (iv. 596). In this chapter I will argue that *St. Mawr*, with its Australian characters Rico, and the Manby sisters, represents Lawrence’s major fictional closure with Australia, rather than, as is generally assumed, *The Boy in the Bush*. While *St. Mawr* is not set in Australia it is, nevertheless, in important respects, *about* Australia, just as it is also concerned with both England and America. In *St. Mawr* we do not find an Australia richly and imaginatively evoked, as we do in *Kangaroo* and *The Boy*. *St. Mawr*, however, must be bracketed with *Kangaroo* and *The Boy* because, as with these novels, in *St. Mawr* Lawrence continues to expose what he sees as the limitations of the English modern industrial civilisation which he experienced in Australia. Like *The Boy*, *St. Mawr* concludes with a European seeking regeneration in a pre-industrial new world environment, although the new locus for this vision is North America, rather than Western Australia. The New Mexico of *St. Mawr* is, however, in many respects, also a re-statement of the more abstracted north-west of Western Australia found in *The Boy*. While *St. Mawr* exemplifies important elements of Lawrence’s general concerns at the trajectories of English and American civilisation, it is the presence of a peculiarly Australian strain, or perhaps more accurately, “stain,” present in English society, which the novella urges is a particular concern to the health of English society. Rico and the Manbys, therefore, may be seen as Magwitch-like characters, who invade the heart of empire from the periphery, Australia, threatening its integrity.

John Worthen notes a trifle too sweepingly that *St. Mawr* is “Lawrence’s first novel of North America.”<sup>1</sup> *St. Mawr* is also, manifestly, Lawrence’s last novel about Australia. More completely, it is an examination of three Anglophone national identities, reflecting Lawrence’s recent and intense experiences of Australia, England and America over a relatively short period. The novella reflects Lawrence’s concern at what he saw as the

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<sup>1</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*, p. 310. Worthen excludes the first draft of “Quetzalcoatl” completed in mid 1923, arguably Lawrence’s first novel of North America, written before both *St. Mawr* and *The Boy in the Bush*. Lawrence later revised “Quetzalcoatl” as *The Plumed Serpent*, published in 1926. *Quetzalcoatl* was subsequently published posthumously as a novel in its own right in 1995.

degeneracy found in the three modern industrial, democratic societies which most fascinated him, and most frustrated him. While we must agree with David Ellis that *St. Mawr* is, like Forster's *A Passage to India*, "a satire of English civilisation" (DG, 190), we must acknowledge the Australian strand of that civilisation, which Lawrence found to be particularly distasteful, as is evidenced in *Kangaroo*. While it was "the newest country: young Australia!" (K, 13:38), the "uncouth Australians" were barbarians, and "these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity" induced "a kind of horror" in the novel's protagonist (K, 20:40; 21:1-4). In *St. Mawr*, it is these British Australians who invade England, and Lawrence's heartland – the countryside.

### *A Third Novel(la) of Australia: Contexts and Continuities*

Lawrence's itinerary in late 1923 and early 1924 provides an important context for his writing of *St. Mawr*. On 14 December 1923 he returned to England after his first sojourn in America, having written most of *The Boy*, and immediately felt "like an animal in a trap" (iv. 542). His relationship with Frieda was also severely strained – she had gone ahead of him to England. Over his next few months in England Lawrence continued to work on *The Boy in the Bush* (iv. 544), and his recollections of Australia must have occupied part of his thoughts. So too America, to which he wanted to return "in the Spring" (iv. 543).

Lawrence left England for America on 5 March 1924 (iv. 599), and *St Mawr*, which Lawrence was writing by June 1924 (DG, 550), is very much the product of this period of flux, between the end of 1923 and early 1924, when he was uniquely preoccupied with England, Australia and America. *St. Mawr* contains characters from all three countries and is set in both England and America.

Paul Eggert observes that Lawrence penned the new final chapter of *The Boy* in London, whereas the bulk of the novel was written earlier in America, and sees this as a "fresh start: it is another attempt to unlock the dilemma – to show that extremes are liveable by Jack's establishing a colony in the Northwest."<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, however, although still writing of Australia at the end of 1923, had, by then, been away from it for over sixteen months. He had, meanwhile, tasted New Mexico, Mexico and California and been stimulated to introduce new characters into *The Boy*. In London Dorothy Brett agreed to

<sup>2</sup> Eggert, "Comedy and Provisionality," pp. 132-153.

accompany him and Frieda back to America (iv.596), and Lawrence back-fills her into the novel in the figure of Hilda Blessington (BB, xxxii, 432). It is apparent also that while Lawrence was finishing *The Boy*, there was an element of convergence in his regenerative visions of Australia and America, with the eventual shift towards the latter in *St. Mawr*. Lawrence's trek through the dry landscape of southern California and western Mexico appears to have stimulated his recall of the Australian bush (DG, 131). The convergence also caused Lawrence confusion. In *The Boy*, Gran Ellis keeps English "half-sovereigns" and "half- crowns hidden away (BB, 267:1-2), the currency in circulation in the Western Australia of the 1880s, whereas Tom, visiting Perth, impossibly has only a "couple o' dollars" (BB, 236:14), an apparent leakage of American currency into the text. Lawrence's "fresh start" at Australia in *The Boy*, may also be seen as the beginning of a fresh look at America as well – he had already written "Quetzalcoatl." *The Boy's* last chapter on Australia, where Jack again encounters Hilda, anticipates the later wilderness horse rides in "The Woman Who Rode Away" and "The Princess" set in America, as well as the centrality of the horse St. Mawr in the novella. Eggert does not identify linkages between *The Boy* and *St Mawr*, but he does link Lawrence's evocation of the horse in *The Boy* with his reaction to the Navajo horse myths published in *Laughing Horse* (BB, xxxi-xxxii). And his overarching discussion of Lawrence's provisionality, and Lawrence's "re-vision" at the end of *The Boy*, provides a valuable lens for looking at the way *St. Mawr* and *The Boy* interconnect:

Such revision is indeed re-vision, and there is no intrinsic reason why it should stop there, except that Lawrence lived by his pen, and looked to publication (in this case, to make money for himself and Mollie Skinner). Nevertheless the point stands: only the constraints of publishing schedules give an appearance of fixity to a process that was essentially ongoing.<sup>3</sup>

Seen in this light, Lawrence's concerns about Australia portrayed in *The Boy* are "ongoing" in *St. Mawr*. Eggert also notes that by the final chapter of *The Boy* Lawrence "was surer where he stood in relation to Jack's rejection of civilised society."<sup>4</sup> This takes him to the remote north-west of Australia. The trajectory of Jack's rejection of "civilised society" is

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

continued in *St. Mawr* in Lou Witt's rejection of Rico and her flight from England to the mountains of New Mexico, where Jack Grant in *The Boy*, would have, as it were, been equally at home as in the Australian bush.

### *Identifying the Australian Presence*

On page one of *St. Mawr* we learn that Rico was "an Australian, son of a government official in Melbourne, who had been made a baronet" (*SM*, 21:31-32). There is no obvious foundation for Rico amongst Lawrence's acquaintances, but we might speculate as to his origins. On 13 January 1924, Lawrence wrote from London to Mollie Skinner, advising her that he had received "Lord Strathspey's fume against *Kangaroo*," which he found "amusing" (iv. 557). Lord Strathspey, born in New Zealand, was the 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Strathspey, and claimed that *Kangaroo* was in "bad taste" and was "a book which no one should read" (iv. 557 note 1). It is possible, therefore, that in Rico, son of a baronet, born in Australia, and created only five months later, Lawrence vented his own "fume" against this narrow-minded similarly antipodean aristocrat.

In chapter 10 I noted Eugene Goodheart's observation of Swiftian resonances in *St. Mawr*, and later critics have described the novella as a "Gulliver-like renunciation of English civilisation."<sup>5</sup> Importantly, in *St. Mawr*, Lawrence also attacks a specifically Australian strand of the greater British "civilisation." From the time of its first appearance, however, critics have focused on the English and American aspects of the novella. There is no reference to Australia on the dust jacket of the first American edition, which quotes liberally from contemporary reviews. For example, one reviewer lauded Lawrence's ability to reveal "the psychology of the classes" he portrayed, without differentiating their nationality.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, F. R. Leavis, the great critic and admirer of Lawrence and his work, in *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, offers no comment on the Australian nationality of either Rico or the Australian couple, the Manbys in his study of *St. Mawr*.<sup>7</sup> Richard Aldington, who knew Lawrence, and who subsequently wrote introductions to Penguin editions of *Kangaroo* and *St. Mawr*, and who was, therefore, well-placed to grasp and

<sup>5</sup> Con Coroneos and Trudi Tate, "Lawrence's Tales," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> B. P. H. quoted on the dust jacket of the first American edition of *St. Mawr* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1925).

<sup>7</sup> F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 272.



compare Lawrence's attitudes to both Australia, England and America, observes that *St. Mawr* displays "an American dry-rot of disgust" and that Lawrence "hates [the American] Mrs Witt," and sees Lawrence as "venting his exasperated hatred of the English parasites" when the horse crushes Rico's foot and kicks his English companion in the teeth.<sup>8</sup> More recently, the "Introduction" to the Cambridge edition of *St Mawr* does not discuss the nationality of the Australian characters, nor are Australian places referenced in the "Explanatory Notes." The Penguin edition of 1997, reproduces the same text and notes as the Cambridge edition, and the new "Introduction" by Charles Rossman, asserts that *St. Mawr* is the product of Lawrence's "so-called 'American phase,'" and does not include Australia amongst the "many places" in which "*St. Mawr* roots itself."<sup>9</sup> Paul Poplawsky, despite his quotations showing that Rico and the Manbys are Australians concludes: "There are five main butts of satire here: Mrs Witt, Rico, upper-class English society, Dean Vyner and English village life."<sup>10</sup> He overlooks the Australian Manbys altogether, and the specifically Australian component in the character of Rico, and the importance of Mrs Witt's American nationality – her being "a parvenue American, a Yankee" (*SM*, 43:5-6). Drew Milne, while persuasively pointing out that *St. Mawr*'s "sympathies with Lou and her mother" reflect Lawrence's "bitter rejection of men after the catastrophe of the First World War," and are a "critique of male degeneration through war and industrialism,"<sup>11</sup> also overlooks the Australian strand in Lawrence's rejection. If, however, as Milne asserts, "the social conditions of the novel's sexual narratives are also historical,"<sup>12</sup> we must also recognise, as Lawrence manifestly does, the origins of Rico's "social conditions" in Australia, if we are to grasp the full meaning of *St. Mawr*. Mark Kinkead-Weekes comes closer to engaging the Australian element in the novel, albeit tangentially and derogatorily. He sees Rico, the "Australian artist," in a generalised sense, as "a colonial type still very much with us."<sup>13</sup> The "us" here is presumably the English. Perhaps Rico reminds him of subsequent expatriate Australian artists resident in England, such as Rolf Harris, Clive

<sup>8</sup> Richard Aldington, "Introduction," *St. Mawr and The Virgin and The Gypsy*, by D. H. Lawrence (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 8, 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Rossman, "Introduction," *St. Mawr and Other Stories*, by D. H. Lawrence, ed., Brian Finney (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. xiii, xviii.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Poplawsky, "Lawrence's Satiric Style: Language and Voice in *St. Mawr*," in *Lawrence and Comedy*, eds., Paul Eggert and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> Drew Milne, "Lawrence and the Politics of Sexual Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 208-209.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, "Decolonising Imagination," p. 77.

James or Barry Humphries, who may be seen by some as having “invaded” England in more recent times. He does not elaborate. Importantly, however, Kinkead-Weekes alerts us to the postcolonial elements in Lawrence’s writing of this period, seeing “the imaginative development and underlying structure” of *St. Mawr* (and “The Princess”) as stemming from “Lawrence’s growing understanding of colonialism and of what it means, to those who profit by it, and to its victims.”<sup>14</sup> Critically, he also observes that “colonial mentality feels its cultural home to be not in the colonial country, but in metropolitan Europe.”<sup>15</sup> It is a colonial mentality which Rico and the Manbys bring to England, and which is the butt of Lawrence’s satire. The Australian characters do not have a single word to say about Australia or their life there. Their socio-cultural allegiance is to England. It is only through the narrator and the observations of other characters that the reader is made aware of their nationality.

Lawrence himself makes no reference to the Australian thread in his novella, and this has served more to throw readers off the scent, than reveal a “truth” about *St. Mawr*. Unlike Jack Callcott in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence’s most developed Australian character, Rico is not presented as an overtly Australian character, either in speech or orientation. And the name “Rico” is a further distraction, sounding, if anything, Spanish. It is presumably a diminutive of “Henry” (*SM*, 21:33), via, one imagines, “Henrico,” in the same way Lawrence himself was at times known as “Lorenzo.” As *St. Mawr* progresses, Rico appears to be strongly Anglicised, he is aspirationally English, and apparently indistinguishable from the English-born members of his class. It is easy to forget that he is Australian, which of course, Rico is busily doing himself. And this is the point. Rico’s desire and *capacity* to blend with English society is a major anxiety in the novella – it is a force of modern degeneration. Rico’s Australian nationality, therefore, is not a minor detail. Along with the similarly expatriate Australian Manbys, Rico embodies Lawrence’s own troubled impressions of Australian society – its curious amalgam of Englishness and colonial Australianness. He recorded the duality surrounding the identity of Australians in *Kangaroo*. Richard Somers is confronted with “uncouth Australians” (*K*, 20:40), and deplores “these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity. He surveyed them from an immense distance, with a kind of horror ” (*K*, 41:3-4). In *Kangaroo*, Australians are therefore, a sub-species of true British (really English) stock. The partial conflation of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

the two nationalities reflected prevailing attitudes in Australia and England, and for Lawrence, constituted a threat.

Australian identity was largely a duality at this time. In the 1920s most Australians still saw themselves as also British, as ““independent Australian Britons,””<sup>16</sup> as the Australian historian W. K. Hancock observed, writing in 1930. Moreover, Australians saw themselves as improved specimens, rather than the lesser types which Lawrence portrays in *Kangaroo*:

The *Bulletin*, which for nearly fifty years has been the most popular and influential mouthpiece of Australia’s literary, economic, and political nationalism, has constantly boasted that the British race is better represented in Australia than in ‘cosmopolitan and nigger-infested England.’<sup>17</sup>

In *Kangaroo* Lawrence, as I have mentioned in chapter 6, depicts the Australian Callcott as a degenerate brute, and contests this kind of view. There is no redeeming Australian character in the novel. Somers finds that in Australia there is no “aristocratic principle,” and “really no class distinction,” and is appalled at being “immersed in a real democracy” (K, 21:14-15, 19, 38). In *Rico and the Manbys*, Lawrence continues his attack on Australian society, moving now into a satire of the petty, colonial Australian aristocracy. This is also a continuation of his satire of Australian colonial society in Western Australia depicted at the Governor’s Dance in *The Boy in the Bush*. Lawrence is not interested in an aristocracy of birth, such as Rico’s, but in “*natural* aristocracy” (P II, 477), and as aspired to by Jack Grant in *The Boy*.

#### *Degenerate Aristocrats and Invasion Fears*

With Rico’s and the Manbys’ presence in the English countryside, Lawrence portrays a particular kind of colonial Australian pretentiousness – that of playing the English squire in England. For Lawrence, this appears to have been an especially odious proposition,

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<sup>16</sup> W. K. Hancock, *Australia* (Brisbane: The Jacaranda Press, 1961), p. 50. Reference to the *Bulletin* is not sourced.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

striking at a heartland which he believed still reflected the essential England. In *Kangaroo* Somers recalls that he had liked “to wander through the hazel copses, away to the real English hamlets, that are still like Shakespeare – and like Hardy’s *Woodlanders*” (*K*, 257:20-22). Rico and the Manbys are intruders in this environment. We have already seen how in *Kangaroo* Lawrence depicted Australian society as derivative, unimaginative and rudderless, so democratic as to be close to “anarchy” (*K*, 22:23). Somers’s great disappointment is that Australia does not articulate its own clear social vision or identity. Seen in this light Rico and the Manbys are, therefore, doubly degenerate – products of a moribund society at the periphery of empire, who invade the centre to sustain their own emptiness, and mimic what Lawrence regarded as the most vacuous elements of his own society.

Kinthead-Weekes argues that Lawrence, in the 1920s, was able to “decolonise his vision.”<sup>18</sup> While there are origins of this “vision,” as I have argued, evident in Lawrence’s evocation of Aborigines in *The Boy*, it is most apparent in Lawrence’s fictional engagements with Native Americans. Lawrence associates Rico the baronet, and the Manbys with the dominant imperial class and culture, and therefore, through his satirical critique of them as agents and/or beneficiaries of British imperialism, to a limited extent, can be seen to be decolonising his vision. Lawrence does not, however, give us a distinct Australian colonial point of view in *St. Mawr*, in the way that, for example, there is a Native American perspective in “The Woman Who Rode Away,” which he wrote immediately before he commenced *St. Mawr*, and where the challenge to see a Native American point of view is, in many respects, the essence of the tale. Lawrence’s attitude to Australia-as-colony is, therefore, only partially decolonised in *St. Mawr*. There is no voice of Australian settler or Aborigine. Rather, *St. Mawr*, through its focus on Rico’s and the Manby’s imitation of Englishness, leaves little room for a broader, more fully realised Australian presence. And, in aligning Rico and the Manbys with their English counterparts, Lawrence both blurs the polarity between the metropolis and colonial periphery of empire, while still making it clear that it is the periphery which offers the greater threat. This contrasts with the sharper delineation between the British and the colonial which Lawrence establishes in *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*. In an essential, indigenous sense, therefore, Australia is not present in *St. Mawr*.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

By the time Lawrence had written *St Mawr* there was a well established body of English literature which expressed invasion fears, and I have already referred to novels such as Stoker's *Dracula*, Haggard's *She*, and Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. We know Lawrence read the latter two works. I have also noted Tony Pinkney's observation that "The Nightmare" chapter in *Kangaroo*, and its depiction of the collapse of London are, "in a sense the Australianisation of London,"<sup>19</sup> and I have suggested that this may be applied to Daniel Sutton's return from Australia in "The Primrose Path." I suggest therefore, that Rico's and the Manbys' presence in England may also be characterised as a further and far more literal "Australianisation" of England than Lawrence portrayed in his earlier works. Pinkney observes that "the Australia of *Kangaroo* is at the very heart of Lawrence's – and modernism's – cultural fears and hopes."<sup>20</sup> Again, these anxieties are even more explicit in *St. Mawr*. Industrial modernity was an abiding horror of Lawrence's and in Australia he found modernity more advanced than in England. In *Kangaroo* Somers is the "enemy of this machine civilisation" (*K*, 348:38-39), and later Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* wants to "wipe the machines off the face of the earth again" (*LCL*, 220:36-37). Rico is satirised in *St. Mawr* because he would "prefer a car" to the horse St. Mawr (*SM*, 32:29). Rico and the Manbys are the "modern" progeny of Britain's empire who have returned to the metropolis and infiltrated the English countryside. They are Australian simulacra of the English leisured class, and *St. Mawr* is manifestly a critique of modern Australian civilisation as it is a critique of the modern elements Lawrence saw at work in English society.

The magnitude of the threat presented by Australia is symbolised by Rico's place of origin. Rico comes from Melbourne, the capital of the state of Victoria. At the time of Lawrence's visit in 1922, and until 1927, while Canberra was the official capital of Australia, the Federal Parliament met in Melbourne, rendering it the *de facto* capital and, through the residency of the Governor-General, the seat of the British imperial presence in Australia. Lawrence demonstrates a sound knowledge of the workings of Australian politics in *Kangaroo*, including its federal basis, and he would have known the status of both Melbourne and the fledgling Canberra from his wide reading of the Australian press. Bruce Steele notes that there was "much public discussion" about Canberra in 1922 (*K*, 485), and Lawrence invents "Canberra Hall" as the place "Labour" holds its meeting (*K*,

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<sup>19</sup> Pinkney, *D. H. Lawrence*, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

304:8). Seen in this light, Lawrence's choice of Melbourne as the city of Rico's birth appears to be deliberately symbolic. Lawrence spent a day in Melbourne, visiting the art gallery (iv. 273), and Rico, the artist and aristocrat, in coming from Melbourne, represents the Australian cultural and political establishment of the mid 1920s. A deep anxiety in *St. Mawr* is that Rico has both the inclination and the wherewithal to remove from Melbourne, the pre-eminent city in Australia, to the metropolitan heart of the empire – to "Hyde Park" where he likes to parade before British royalty (*SM*, 26:14, 38:30). In *The Boy*, Jack's "Hyde Park costume" (*BB*, 66:1) he wears to ride Stampede, is a symbol of the England he must shed in the Western Australian colony. Rico, however, revels in the spectacle of Hyde Park, which he desperately wants to be a part of, but his parading is completely undercut and lampooned by royalty's "mistaking him[...]for somebody else" (*SM*, 38:32). And the novella mocks the possibility that there could be aristocratic lineage in Australia. Early in *St. Mawr*, we learn that Rico is set to marry an Australian girl, "only daughter of one of the oldest families in Victoria" (*SM*, 22:34-35), but the narrator, concludes tartly: "Not saying much" (*SM*, 22:35). Lawrence's early optimistic belief in 1912 that Australia "is *not* a split from England" (i. 425) was, by the time he wrote *St. Mawr*, completely destroyed.

Lawrence was not alone in incorporating problematic Australian characters into his fiction. Another modernist and contemporary of Lawrence's, Virginia Woolf, later depicted in *The Waves* (1931), an Australian character, Louis, who like Rico, is similarly alien and threatening to British society. Woolf's creation of a problematic Australian character illustrates the persistence of British fears of degeneration well into the inter-war period. Unlike Lawrence in *St. Mawr*, Woolf gives Louis an Australian point of view, but this serves only to implicate him further in the charge of degeneracy levelled at him by the novel as a whole. Early in *The Waves*, Louis struggles to establish himself in England, but Woolf attacks Louis as bitterly as does Lawrence Rico. Louis's presence in English society is anomalous and he feels tortured by his difference:

My roots are threaded, like fibres in a flower pot, round and round about the world. I do not wish to come to the top and live in the light of this great clock, yellow-faced, which ticks and ticks. Jinny and Susan, Bernard and Neville bind themselves

into a thong with which to lash me. They laugh at my neatness, at my Australian accent. I will now try to imitate Bernard softly lisping Latin.<sup>21</sup>

Although we are encouraged to empathise with his discomfort, the image of Louis enveloping the world “round and round” suggests that he is insidiously strangling those about him. The menacing image of his threading roots converges later with the lashing “thong” of the other characters. Louis is differentiated and shamed by his Australian accent: “‘I will not conjugate the verb,’ said Louis, ‘until Bernard has said it. My father is a banker in Brisbane and I speak with an Australian accent. I will wait and copy Bernard. He is English. They are all English.’”<sup>22</sup> Louis’s reference to his father being “a banker in Brisbane,” becomes, through constant repetition, a kind of mantra in the novel, continually drawing attention to his colonial otherness. The alliteration produces a hypnotic and, ultimately, comic absurdity. Hermione Lee’s observation on the importance of rhythm in *The Waves* is useful here because of her reference to Louis’s Australian speech:

*The Waves* is not difficult to read as poetry; its rhythm is agreeable and insidious. But it is difficult to read as a novel, in that its emphasis on rhythm overwhelms distinctions of character. Only the content enables us to distinguish between the voices. An idiosyncrasy of speech – Louis’s Australian accent – can be described but not rendered, since, obviously, the formal framework of ‘said Louis’, ‘said Bernard’, is a sustained irony: real speech is not being represented.<sup>23</sup>

Lee draws attention to Woolf’s technique in handling Australianness, rather than the meaning of its otherness. Lee sees Louis’s Australianness as merely an “idiosyncrasy” – an unimportant and mildly differentiating feature like eye colour. And her literal observation that “real speech” is not occurring in the novel is somewhat pedantic and distracting. Accents are, of course, rendered in a novel, and Lawrence attempts to convey Australian accents in *Kangaroo* reproducing “Cockney Australian” as: “‘next people who kyme arfter must’ev tyken it’” (*K*, 25:26-28). The importance of Australianness in *The Waves* is that

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Hermione Lee, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (London: Methuen and Co, Ltd., 1977), p. 164.

Louis fits in easily with his English friends, *except* for his Australian accent. But his accent is more than idiosyncratic. It is, the novel asserts, symptomatic of his deeper, irreconcilable difference. This is why the novel keeps this fact before us. From a British perspective, Brisbane in 1931 was a remote and unimportant colonial destination. Are there banks in Brisbane? we imagine the implied reader of the 1930s asking. And if there are banks, surely they would be of no consequence to the financial hub of the empire – London. Louis's Brisbane origins are, nevertheless, an issue, because that city, in spite of its distant colonial irrelevance, has produced a person who comes very close to passing for English. *The Waves* asserts that Louis can not, indeed must not, find acceptance in the metropolitan heart of empire. The first reason is that Louis is tainted by his material concerns – his need to earn his living. And, for this reason, he is jealous of his English friends who are able to live an aristocratic life of leisure and repose, while he will be forced to toil in the city of London:

They are all boasting, all talking, except Neville, who slips a look occasionally over the edge of a French novel, and so will always slip into cushioned firelit rooms, with many books and one friend, while I tilt on an office chair behind a counter. Then I shall grow bitter and mock at them. I shall envy them their continuance down the safe traditional ways under the shade of old yew trees while I consort with cockneys and clerks, and tap the pavements of the city.<sup>24</sup>

The second reason stems from the first. While Louis is jealous of English aristocratic ease, he is strongly wedded to his career and its modernist trappings: “I am half in love with the typewriter and the telephone,”<sup>25</sup> he gloats. More insidious is his success in throwing off his origins and becoming a captain at the heart of empire. He is a son of England's empire returning to the motherland to take control. Louis sees himself as taking his rightful place, continuing a great line of empire builders:

My shoulder is to the wheel; I roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world. If I press

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<sup>24</sup> Woolf, *The Waves*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.



on, from chaos making order, I shall find myself where Chatham stood, and Pitt, Burke and Sir Robert Peel. Thus I expunge certain stains, and erase old defilements; the woman who gave me a flag from the top of the Christmas tree; my accent; beatings and other tortures; the boasting boys; my father, a banker at Brisbane.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Britain's colonial project, "the spreading of commerce," is suspect and is backfiring. And Louis's Australian accent is one of the "stains" which ought, in the eyes of the novel, to be obliterated. In *St. Mawr*, Rico similarly, seeks to cast off his Australianness by melding into English society. He succeeds, becoming indistinguishable from the English. While Woolf depicts an Australian infiltrating England's commercial heart in London, Lawrence depicts a similar incursion, into the English countryside. *St. Mawr*, therefore, like the later *The Waves*, articulates deep fears at the direction British society is taking in the period between the wars, and implicates modern Australia in the problem.

### *Australian Modern*

Despite his possessing a kind of colonial cunning and ability to survive, Rico's sense of his nationality is insecure, this is apparent to the indigenous "aboriginal" Welsh groom, who has a strong sense of his own identity:

And Rico was still sufficiently a colonial to be uneasily aware of the underbrush, uneasy under the watchfulness of the pale-grey eyes, and uneasy in that man-to-man exposure which is characteristic of the democratic colonies and of America. He knew he must ultimately be judged on his merits as a man, alone without a background: an ungarnished colonial.

Thus lack of background, this defencelessness man-to-man business which left him at the mercy of every servant, was bad for his nerves. For he was also an artist. He bore up against it in a kind of desperation, and was easily moved to rancorous resentment. At the same time, he was free of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 143-144.

the Englishman's water-tight *suffisance*. He really was aware that he would have to hold his own all alone, thrown alone on his own defences in the universe. The extreme democracy of the Colonies had taught him this. And this, the little aboriginal [Welsh] Lewis recognised in him. He recognised also Rico's curious hollow misgiving, fear of some deficiency in himself, beneath all his handsome, young-hero appearance. (*SM*, 34:8-24)

The Welsh groom, therefore, is more properly aligned with St. Mawr, rather than Rico.

Richard Aldington aptly describes Rico as one of "industrialism's genteel parasites."<sup>27</sup> Although Rico is not himself an "industrial magnate" like the doomed Gerald Crich in *Women in Love* (*WL*, 211), his Australianness, following Pinkney's observations outlined earlier, deeply implicates him in the industrial modernity Lawrence reviled. He prefers a car to a horse. Lou, Rico's wife, and her mother ride in Hyde Park and this Lawrence satirises through its being reported in the "society columns" (*SM*, 26:31). Lou decides that Rico must join them, but he responds with a "squirming" manner "caught at Oxford" and then she learns that "he couldn't ride, and that he didn't care for riding" (*SM*, 26:39-40). Lou enquires sarcastically: "I thought you used to ride so much, in Australia, when you were young" (*SM*, 27:15-16). The implication here is: what sort of Australian (or aristocrat) can't ride a horse? Rico, however, has turned his back on this in favour of driving a car. When Lou tells him she will purchase St. Mawr as a gift for him Rico protests: "Lou dearest, *don't* spend a fortune on a horse for me, which I *don't* want. Honestly, I prefer a car" (*SM*, 32:28-29). He "*would*," however, "like to cut a handsome figure in the park" (*SM*, 32:35). Much later the narrator laments the trend of modern life: "Man wisely invents motor-cars and other machines, automobile and locomotive. The horse is superannuated, for man" (*SM*, 84:6-7). Rico lives life "like an amiable machine from day to day" (*SM*, 94:2-3). It is not only Australians, however, who are invading London in *St. Mawr*, but the Americans, Mrs Witt and her daughter Lou, as well. Two modern New World societies are united in the marriage of the Australian Rico and the American Lou. It is a double threat when they attempt to "settle in a certain layer of English society" (*SM*, 23:27). The novella makes it clear, however, that they are unwelcome. As outsiders they "would never quite go down in any society" (*SM*, 23:31-32).

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Aldington, "Introduction," *St Mawr and The Virgin and the Gipsy*, by D. H. Lawrence, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 7.

Mrs Witt is somewhat detached from the machinations of society. Her house in the country is adjacent to a church, and the English scene is to her an absurd and romantic novelty: “‘I never knew what comfort it would be’, said Mrs Witt, ‘to have grave-stones under my drawing-room windows, and funerals for lunch’” (*SM*, 42:30-32). But during one lunch, in the eyes of the English Dean, Mrs Witt, Lou and Rico are all interlopers: “He was a gentleman, and a man of learning in his own line. But he let Mrs Witt know that he looked down on her just a little – as a parvenu American[...]: at the same time he had a sincere respect for her, as a rich woman” (*SM*, 43:3-7). The Dean, however, is no less satirised than Mrs Witt, Lou and Rico:

Lou knew that every Englishman, especially of the upper classes, has a wholesome respect for riches. But then, who hasn’t?

The Dean was more *impressed* by Mrs Witt than little Lou. But to Lady Carrington he was charming: she was *almost* ‘one of us,’ you know. And he was very gracious to Rico: ‘your father’s splendid colonial service.’  
(*SM*, 43:9-14)

The Dean is ironic about the “splendid colonial service,” and the implication is that Rico’s family should remain in Australia. And Lou, who as Rico’s wife is Lady Carrington, is only “*almost*” one of the Dean’s class. Mrs Witt, however, from the outset, has no real desire for acceptance and permanency – it is all simply “a new pantomime to amuse her” (*SM*, 43:15). She is impervious to the Dean’s snobberies, and neither she nor Lou wish to remain in England. This detachment distinguishes the Americans from the Australians. Rico wants desperately to be accepted in England.

Although the Dean is motivated by snobbery in his condescension towards the colonial Rico, the novella as a whole condemns Rico for a suite of reasons which extend well beyond the Dean’s narrowly prescribed Anglo-centric world-view. These derive from Rico’s emblematic modern degeneracy. In addition to his preference for cars over horses, and his origins in a colonial democracy, already mentioned, Rico displays other modern characteristics. He pursues a mentalised life, in stark contrast to the sensuous “barbaric exultance[...]devoid of emotion,” attributed to the horse-hero St. Mawr (*SM*, 39:39-40).

“Rico, in his way, was a psychologist,” (*SM*, 45:1-2) the narrator informs us. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* Lawrence ridicules Freudian psychoanalysis and the

emergence of “a theory of pure psychology” (*PU*, 7:11). In *St. Mawr*, the modern marriage between Rico and Lou collapses because their attraction to each other was an “attachment of the will and the nerves” which was “destructive” (*SM*, 24:7). “It was a marriage, but without sex,” which was “shattering and exhausting” (*SM*, 24:11-12). This is the environment in which Lou purchases *St. Mawr* and the stallion functions as a surrogate lover for her. “I might take him to America” (*SM*, 30:20-21), she speculates, before the purchase, “she was prepared to sacrifice Rico” (*SM*, 35:27). In *Fantasia of the Unconscious* Lawrence remarks that “almost invariably, a married woman, as she passes the age of thirty, conceives a contempt or a dislike for her husband [...]. Particularly if he be a good husband, a true modern” (*PU*, 160:34-36). Rico is a “true modern” and Lou ultimately moves back to America “to escape from the friction which is the whole stimulus in modern social life” (*SM*, 137:6-7). Rico lives “self-consciously, craving the distractions of a fast social life” (*SM*, 38:26). Even his head is “perfectly designed for social purposes” – he has “one of the famous ‘talking heads’ of modern youth” (*SM*, 33:40, 34:1). Rico thrives on superficiality, and destructive banter:

‘Do you know,’ said Rico, as they sat at lunch, he and Lou and Mrs Witt, in Mrs Witt’s sitting-room in the dark, quiet hotel in Mayfair; ‘I really like riding *St. Mawr* so much. He really is a noble animal. – If ever I am made a Lord – which heaven forbid! – I shall be Lord *St. Mawr*.’

‘You mean,’ said Mrs Witt, ‘his real lordship would be the horse?’

‘Very possible, I admit’, said Rico, with a curl of his long upper lip.’

(*SM*, 38:33-40)

*St. Mawr* proves to be more noble than Rico and this conversation further reveals the absurdity of Rico’s English aristocratic pretensions and mocks his alliance of his sexual prowess with that of the stallion.

Rico displays other modern and degenerate weaknesses. He is feminised, conservative and timid. Mrs Witt laments the passing of her vision of the “old Englishmen” who are “so *robust*” (*SM*, 45:16-18). The “*young* Englishmen” she finds “perfect ladies” (*SM*, 45:18-19). Rico replies: “‘*Somebody* has to keep up the tradition of the perfect lady’” (*SM*, 45:20-21). Rico’s interest in “tradition” highlights his lack of vision. He cannot be a Lawrentian “pioneer.” Rico is the antithesis of a Lawrentian

aristocrat, as for example, envisaged by Lawrence in *The Boy*. And in *Fantasia*, Lawrence writes: “You’ve got to take a new resolution into your soul, and break off from the old way” (*PU*, 198:27-28). Although coming from a new country, Australia, Rico, represents the spectacular failure of modern manhood in that country. His sterile modernity is destructive, and ultimately, degenerate: “Ah, Rico! He was one of mankind’s myriad conspirators, who conspire to live in absolute physical safety, whilst willing the minor disintegration of all positive living” (*SM*, 82:12-14).

Rico refuses to accompany his wife to America, and his separation from Lou is rendered seamless, thanks to his relationship with fellow Australian, Flora Manby:

Rico consented to spend the month in Shropshire, because for near neighbours Mrs Witt had the Manbys, at Corrabach Hall. The Manbys were rich Australians returned to the old country set up as Squires, all in full blow. Rico had known them in Victoria: they were of good family: and the girls made a great fuss of him. (*SM*, 42:21-24)

The company of the Australian Manbys is Rico’s natural habitat. Again we find the invasion theme attached to the Manbys. The Manbys, having “returned to the old country” and instantly “set up as Squires,” are also heavily satirised for their pretensions. They are a further example of the infestation of England by Australians. Like Rico the Manbys represent an advanced state of decayed modernity. Flora Manby asserts the rights of the modern woman. “I consider these days are the best ever, especially for girls” (*SM*, 74:21), she reports, and, having read “H. G. Wells” history, is relieved that she does not have to “cringe before mouldy domineering men” (*SM*, 74:29, 31-32). In *Kangaroo* Lawrence had already coupled Australia with what he saw as the modern woman’s disintegrating bid for freedom. At the conclusion of that novel, Somers directs a tirade at his wife Harriett:

‘All you white females, raging for further freedom. Wait, wait till you’ve got it and see how the devils will bite you with unclean, reptile sort of mouths. Wait, you who love Australia and its freedom. Only let me leave you to the freedom, till it bites you with a sort of sewer-mouth, like all these rats.’ (*K*, 351:19-23)

Like Rico, the Manby sisters pursue a fast and superficial social life and this is what draws him:

Rico immediately started the social round: first the Manbys: then motor twenty miles to luncheon at Lady Tewkesbury's: then young Mr Burns came flying down in his aeroplane from Chester: then they must motor to the sea, to Sir Edward Edward's place, where there was a moonlight bathing party. (*SM*, 45:30-34)

Here Lawrence satirically aligns emblematic symbols of modernity with the social round of this class. The pace of social engagement is facilitated by the modern motor car, and rendered preposterous with Mr Burns's modern private plane. Kingsley Widmer sums up the tendencies of the modern man as seen by Lawrence in Rico: "Sexual introvert and social poseur appear repeatedly to be matching symptoms of modernity for Lawrence,"<sup>28</sup> he writes. Lou finds the social round "so innerly wearisome," and with a sharp assertion of Lawrence's countervailing primal values, the narrator continues: "Back of it all was St. Mawr, looming like a bonfire in the dark" (*SM*, 45:36).

#### *St. Mawr's "Kick" at Modern Australia*

As the tension between Rico, his wife and his mother-in-law increases, Rico drifts further towards the Manbys at Corrabach for distraction and company. Flora Manby flatters his ego. Symbolically, he first thinks of the car, but he can impress Flora more with St. Mawr:

He must get out: get away from the house. How? Something was wrong with the car. Yet he must get away, away. He would go over to Corrabach. He would ride St. Mawr. He had been talking about the horse, and Flora Manby was dying to see him. She had said: "Oh, I can't *wait* to see that marvellous horse of yours." (*SM*, 49:1-6)

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<sup>28</sup> Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 71.

Rico's ride to Corrabach is a contest between man and beast, between modern man's urge to dominate and the primal instinct for freedom. He arrives "something of a conqueror" (*SM*, 51:10). This is the reverse of the approach taken by Jack Grant in *The Boy* who when riding Stampede "did not want to fight the horse for simple mastery" (*BB*, 67:11). This scene illustrates the fracture between Lou and her emerging vision of independence in a remote corner of America, and the social whirl of the Australians. When Flora and Rico, (who has spent the night at Corrabach), and Elsie Manby and her husband descend on Mrs Witt's house, Lou has already decided that "Rico seemed to her the symbol of the futility" of her life (*SM*, 51:15). Rico displays an "*empressé* anxiety" towards her, "which spoke too many volumes" (*SM*, 62:34-35), and there is a ghastly exchange of diplomatic greetings and false delight as the Corrabach party settle in to stay over at Mrs Witt's: "It had begun again, the whole clock-work of lots of fun!" (*SM*, 63:25). Lawrence himself was appalled at this time by the social chatter associated with this sort of life:

And what does one do, in London? I, not having a job to attend to, lounge round and gaze in bleak wonder on the ceaseless dullness. Or I have luncheons and dinners with friends, and talk. Now my deepest private dread of London is my dread of this talk.

[...]Utter inaction and storms of talk. That again is London to me. And the sense of abject futility in it all only deepens the sense of abject dullness, so all there is to do is go away. (*P II*, 560-561)

It is this society which St. Mawr literally kicks in the teeth. During the climactic ride through the countryside which follows the Manbys' visit, Rico continues to be drawn to the Manby set. He is "slightly piqued" (*SM*, 75:28) that his wife does not enjoy the expedition as much as the Manby sisters who "were enjoying themselves so much" (*SM*, 75:20). St. Mawr's desperate rearing up beneath Rico, which results in Rico's injury, and the horse's "kick in the face" to Elsie's husband Edward (*SM*, 76:26), confirm the novel's attitude to the "Manby group" (*SM*, 75:28), the three Australians and the attendant English husband. They are being kicked out of England.

With St. Mawr's lashing out at Rico and Edward, the novella reiterates its earlier assertion of the lost primal qualities of man over those of the intellect:

‘Why, mother!’ said Lou impatiently. ‘I think one gets so tired of your men with mind, as you call it. There are so many of that sort of clever men. And there are lots of men who aren’t very clever, but are rather nice: and lots are stupid. It seems to me there’s something else besides mind and cleverness, or niceness or cleanness. Perhaps it is the animal. Just think of St. Mawr! I’ve thought so much about him. We call him an animal, but we never know what it means. He seems a far greater mystery to me than a clever man. He’s a horse. Why can’t one say in the same way, of a man: *He’s a man?* There seems no mystery in being a man. But there’s a terrible mystery in St. Mawr.’ (*SM*, 59:34-40, 60:1-3)

The image of the horse as a symbol of vitality figured prominently in Lawrence’s mind during his short visit to England between late 1923 and early 1924. In “Dear Old Horse, A The London Letter,” written during this period (*MM II*, xli), Lawrence writes:

Oh Horse, Horse, Horse, when you kick your heels you shatter an enclosure every time. And over here the horse is dead: He’ll kick his heels no more. [...]Two legged man is no good. If he’s going to stand steady, he must stand on four feet. Like the Centaur. (*MM II*, 137:32-34, 138:155).

Paul Eggert notes the influence of “The London Letter” on the final chapter of *The Boy in the Bush*, concluding that the chapter was written at the same time (*BB*, xxxii). Clearly the figure of the horse, embodied as it is in the final chapter of *The Boy* – “The Rider on the Red Horse” – takes on a deeper significance for Lawrence during this transition between his Australian and American periods. But Lawrence had long seen the horse as a symbol of elemental passion in the face of modernity. In *Women in Love* Gerald Crich “forced” the mare he was riding “with an almost mechanical relentlessness” to confront a steam train as it passed through a nearby crossing (*WL*, 111:30, 33). Ursula Brangwen, in witnessing the scene, condemns Crich as a “fool” and a “bully” (*WL*, 113:7-8), seeing the horse as “a sensitive creature, ten times as sensitive” as Crich (*WL*, 113:18-19). Crich the coal mine owner’s crude assertion of strength, his cruel digging with his “bright spurs” (*WL*, 112:8-9), is mechanical like the locomotive’s. His dominance over the mare symbolises the dominance of industrial modernity. In Australia, Lawrence intensified his belief that horses



represented the antithesis of modernity. In *Kangaroo*, in the rural environment of the south coast of New South Wales, the narrator reports approvingly of men still “riding nice slim horses” about the place, and “a woman riding astride top speed on the roadside grass” (*K*, 275:15-16). This is an aspect of Australian life which is not degenerate, a remnant of pre-industrial Australia. When Lawrence was in Australia, however, he could not yet ride a horse. Perhaps he and Frieda, given “the woman riding astride” in *Kangaroo*, were already intending to learn in America. Less than three weeks after his arrival there Lawrence wrote to Robert Mountsier: “It is very nice here: we learn to ride horseback, F[rieda] and I” (*iv*, 306). By the end of September 1922 they could “gallop” (*iv*, 316).

Despite his pompous pronouncements, deep down, Rico “hated his horse” St. Mawr, and “viciously tried to force him to a quiet, straight trot” (*SM*, 39:25). He controls him (like Crich and the mare in *Women in Love*) with his “spurs” (*SM*, 49:32). In *The Boy in the Bush*, Lawrence, in Easu, associated this kind of cowardly aggression with Australians. Both Rico and Easu exhibit a similar wilful cruelty. In *The Boy* the narrator observes:

In Australia a new sort of fight. A fight with tame dogs that were playing wild. Easu was a tame dog, playing the wolf in a mongrel, back-biting way. Tame dogs escaped and become licentious. That was Australia. He knew that. (*BB*, 307:1-4)

Although from a different class of Australian, Lou sees Rico in the same light:

‘And in men like Rico, the animal has gone queer and wrong. And in those nice clean boys you liked so much in the war, there is no wild animal left in them. They’re all tame dogs, even when they’re brave and well-bred. They’re all tame dogs, mother, with human masters. There’s no mystery in them.’ (*SM*, 61:31-36).

With St. Mawr, Lawrence proposes that the purest “human” characteristics are “animal.” Whereas the Englishman Jack Grant in *The Boy* is “one blood with the horse, and had the centaur’s superlative horse-sense” (*BB*, 121:15-16), St. Mawr does not permit human dominance, and takes on the attributes of a fully developed character. It is St. Mawr who is

truly “wild,” not people such as Easu and Rico, or even Jack. Immediately prior to the climactic moment in which St. Mawr rears, “Lou, from a little distance, watched the glossy, powerful haunches of St. Mawr swaying with life, always too much life, like a menace” (*SM*, 75:34-36). Rico can only cry: “Fool!” (*SM*, 76:3). As the horse rears, it is his own wilful foolishness which brings St Mawr down on top of him. The result is “two broken ribs and a crushed ankle” (*SM*, 81:1). This incident reveals the cruelty behind Rico’s earlier superficial regard for the animal: “‘I want St. Mawr *shot!*’ was almost his first word, when he was in bed at the farm and Lou was sitting beside him” (*SM*, 81:3-4). Lou quizzes him coolly: “‘Do you want to shoot him yourself?’” His reply: “‘No. But I want to have him shot,’” confirms that he does not have the courage of his conviction (*SM*, 81:8-9). By contrast, Mrs Witt’s “sympathies are with the stallion” (*SM*, 91:7-8). She announces boldly: “I am an American woman, and I always have to stand up for the accused” (*SM*, 2-3), and while we sympathise with her viewpoint, Lawrence manages to also satirise her American democratic assertion. Rico decides to sell the horse to Flora Manby, and, although it is quite advanced in years, we learn that she “would geld St. Mawr” (*SM*, 95:10), further evidence of the cruelty at the heart of modernity. By contrast, for Rico’s wife Lou, her husband’s catastrophe is a defining moment. St. Mawr represents another way of living. St. Mawr’s mating call in a nearby field is a call to her. Her summation of the responses to the climactic events is Lawrence’s metaphor for the degeneration of the times:

He was neighing to Poppy. Clear on the wet wind came the sound of his bell-like stallion’s calling, that Mrs Vyner called cruel. It was a strange noise, with a splendour that belonged to another world-age. The mean cruelty of Mrs Vyner’s humanitarianism, the barren cruelty of Flora Manby, the eunuch cruelty of Rico. Our whole eunuch civilisation, nasty-minded as eunuchs are, with their kind of sneaking, sterilising cruelty. (*SM*, 96:30-36)

Rico, however, unlike Crich in *Women in Love*, and Easu in *The Boy*, both of whom die as a consequence of their cruelty, is merely injured. “There *may* be a limp” as a result of his being crushed by St. Mawr (*SM*, 87:13). In this respect, he anticipates Clifford Chatterley in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, a later example of Lawrence’s crippled modern manhood.

While Rico convalesces at the Manbys, Lou considers her future. Her mother sums up the situation for her daughter, and in suggesting the following response to Flora Manby's love-interest in Rico, delightfully parodies Flora's proposed gelding of St. Mawr:

‘I should say: *Miss Manby, you may have my husband, but not my horse. My husband won't need emasculating, and my horse I won't have you meddle with. I'll preserve one last male thing in the museum of this world, if I can.*’ (SM, 97:17-20)

The marriage is finished at this point and Lou and her mother decide to quit England and return to America, taking St. Mawr with them. Lou negotiates the end of the relationship with skilful and comic intensity. She writes to her mother, who has by this time departed:

‘And I don't think I should have made any final announcement to Rico, if he hadn't been such a beautiful pig in clover, here at Corrabach Hall. He has known the Manbys all his life; they and he are sections of one engine. He would be far happier with Flora: or I won't say happier, because there is something in him which rebels: but he would on the whole fit much better. I myself am at the end of my limit, and beyond it. I can't “mix” any more, and I refuse to.’ (SM, 118:3-10)

Rico and Flora “fit” because they are Australian and parts of “one engine,” and the image symbolises their connection with industrial modernity. Lou finally escapes this and joins her mother in America, leaving an England infested with degenerate Australians.

Brian Finney suggests that Lawrence may originally have intended *St. Mawr* primarily as “a satire of English society” (SM, xxv.). We must also include the Australian strand to that society. He also notes that the novella could have ended before Lou and her mother travel to America. Finney speculates that Lawrence may have continued with *St. Mawr* after witnessing a snake dance in America, but whatever the reason Lawrence had for continuing, as Finney remarks, the latter part of *St. Mawr* is a “long American coda” (SM, xxvi). The Australian characters of the earlier part of the story disappear entirely at this point and the “coda” reflects Lawrence's increasingly regenerative vision of non-industrial America. There remains in *St. Mawr*, however, an important reminder of the

regenerative promise Lawrence saw in a pre-modern Australia. Early in the novel, Mr Saintsbury, who sells St. Mawr to Lou remarks: ““They say it’s been the making of some horses, to take them over the water, to Australia or such places. It might repay you—you never know’” (*SM*, 30: 23-25). The novella does, therefore, leave open the possibility that Australia, with its bush and vast unsettled areas, might yet offer regenerative promise to people with St. Mawr’s “alert intensity” (*SM*, 30:27). Lou has this faculty, sharing an “ancient understanding” with the animal (*SM*, 12-13). Being American, however, and already at odds with her Australian husband, she naturally turns to America, where Lawrence himself was living when he wrote *St. Mawr*.

12. LATER WORDS: "PREFACE TO *BLACK SWANS*," "THE HAND," *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*, "EVE IN THE LAND OF NOD," *BUSHWHACKERS*, "INTRODUCTION TO 'PANSIES,'" AND MIMOSA

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that with *St. Mawr* (1925), Lawrence's fictional engagement with Australia extended beyond *The Boy in the Bush* (1924). In this final chapter I will show that Lawrence continued to engage with Australia for the last five years of his life, until two weeks before his death on 2 March 1930. While with *St. Mawr*, Lawrence completed his major published fictional evocations of Australia, he continued to reference Australia in a range of works and in his letters. In Lawrence's later writings there is evidence that Lawrence was still attracted to the regenerative potential of Australia, praising its energy and the beauty of the bush, while remaining largely disappointed with the reality of modern Australia.

In December 1924, some six months after he had begun *St. Mawr*, Lawrence wrote the unused "Preface to *Black Swans*" a novel of Mollie Skinner's which was published largely on the strength of her earlier collaboration with Lawrence in *The Boy*. In late 1925, he assisted her with the publication of a short story "The Hand" and contributed additional text (v. 351, and n. 1). Australia is also referenced in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). In late 1928, Lawrence became involved with another of Skinner's novels, "Eve in the Land of Nod," but he declined to fully re-work it as he had her "House of Ellis." Lawrence did, however, make important edits to Skinner's typescript before returning it to her, and composed some complete paragraphs, thereby producing additional fiction about Australia – amongst Lawrence's last ever fictional output (although unpublished), situated between *The Escaped Cock* (1929) and *Apocalypse* (1931). Later in 1928, Lawrence received a copy of *The London Aphrodite* established by two hard-drinking literary and somewhat larrikin Australians, Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen, which resulted in his meeting Stephensen, and a brief and intense friendship. The two men corresponded through much of 1929, and Lawrence's letters convey further impressions of Australia. Stimulated, perhaps, by Skinner and Stephensen into a recall of Australia, Lawrence also revisited Australia in his "Introduction to *Pansies*," which he wrote in January 1929. Finally, in several of his letters of early 1930, Lawrence links mimosa (Australian wattle) blossoms flowering in France with his recollections of the spectacular spring displays of this plant in

Australia. In aggregate, these later engagements with Australia, between the publication of *St. Mawr* in 1925, and his death, in 1930, show that Lawrence continued to be both excited and frustrated about Australia. They conclude the final phase of Lawrence's fascination with the country, which had begun in 1911 – some nineteen years earlier.

*"Introduction to Black Swans," "The Hand," and "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*

Lawrence continued to correspond with Mollie Skinner after the publication of their *The Boy in the Bush*. His writing of a Preface for her *Black Swans* (1925) can be traced back to their brief meeting in Western Australia in 1922. Skinner records in her autobiography, *The Fifth Sparrow*, that Lawrence was impressed with her first novel, *Letters of a V. A. D.*, which had been published in London in 1918, and which she showed him during his visit.<sup>1</sup> Skinner then reports that Lawrence encouraged her to write more: "'Why don't you write about this strange country?' he said. 'About how it was met by the first settlers?'"<sup>2</sup> Lawrence was fascinated by this subject after his reading of the *Western Australian Year-Book for 1902-1904*, which had been passed to him by William Siebenhaar, a Dutchman residing in Western Australia, and "'sub-editor'" of the work.<sup>3</sup> She reports that she showed him "the script of *Black Swans* and when he had read it [they] had many conversations while everyone else was lying down after lunch."<sup>4</sup> Lawrence, however, steered her towards his earlier suggestion: "'You are going to write that book about the settlers, eh?' he kept urging. 'Put *Black Swans* aside.'"<sup>5</sup> And she did, eventually forwarding Lawrence her "The House of Ellis," while he was in Mexico, which he was to re-write as *The Boy in the Bush* (v. 466-467). Skinner, however, kept faith with her *Black Swans*, taking it with her to London, in the lead-up to the publication of *The Boy* (v. 71). Skinner had been in touch with Lawrence about her hopes for her novel (v. 71), and he wrote back encouragingly to her on 8 July 1924: "I hope 'Lettie' meets with a warm reception. What do you say you'll call it? *Black Swans* sounds nice, to me" (v. 71). Lawrence was demonstrably interested in Skinner's new Australian novel, and while it is possible that he was endorsing her suggested title, it is more likely that in this letter it is he who is suggesting the title, as he

<sup>1</sup> M. L. Skinner, *The Fifth Sparrow: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Eggert, "The Dutch-Australian Connection: Willem Siebenhaar, D. H. Lawrence, Max Havelaar and Kangaroo," *Australian Literary Studies*, 21:1, (2003), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Skinner, *The Fifth Sparrow*, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

had for *The Boy*. Skinner's autobiography, in which she recalls that Lawrence read the manuscript of *Black Swans* in 1922, was published nearly fifty years later in 1972. It is likely, however, that she is retrospectively attributing the published name to the earlier unpublished manuscript which Lawrence read during his visit. This is supported by Lawrence's "Note on Miss M. L. Skinner," which was intended as a preface to the German edition of *The Boy in the Bush* (BB, 372), in which he twice refers simply to the "MS." which he read at the time of his meeting with Skinner, only referring to *Black Swans* in the "present" of when he is writing his "Note" (BB, 373). The appeal to Lawrence of the title *Black Swans* is manifest. Just as the kangaroo, which Lawrence embraced in his novel of the same name, is the quintessential symbol of Australia, so too does the black swan symbolise Western Australia, a state he had visited and written about in *The Boy*. He may have seen that the black swan forms part of the state flag of Western Australia.

Further evidence that Lawrence proposed the title is indicated by the date of Lawrence's "Black Swans" letter to Skinner, dated 8 July, and which was sent from New Mexico. He notes that from her "ship-board" letter she will be in London by the time his letter arrives (v. 71). Skinner writes that she arrived in London "in the early summer of 1924" and submitted her "manuscript" (significantly, she does not name it at this point in her autobiography) to Curtis Brown.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, on 17 June, Martin Secker, who was bringing out *The Boy*, informed Lawrence that Skinner had arrived in London, but he had not met her and does not mention her manuscript, (v. 70, n. 3). Lawrence had not received this letter at the time he replied to Skinner on 8 July, indicating a mail delivery time of at least three weeks. We may presume that Skinner submitted her manuscript to Brown sometime in June and certainly well before she received Lawrence's 8 July *Black Swans* letter, which would have taken several weeks to arrive from America, say by the end of July. It remains highly likely, however, that Lawrence's letter decided the title of the manuscript. The first definitive reference to the manuscript's title occurs about a fortnight after Lawrence's letter to Skinner would have arrived, allowing time for Skinner to have informed Curtis Brown of Lawrence's suggestion. On 13 August, Martin Secker informed Lawrence:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

Curtis Brown sent in Miss Skinner's manuscript "Black Swans", but as it was it was quite hopeless and I fear nothing can be done with it as it stands. We did not imagine that you would wish to spend the time re-writing another work, but if so, of course, that is another matter. (v. 112-113, n. 3)

If Lawrence did suggest Skinner's title, he may also have been recalling his earlier faint echo of Australia in *The Rainbow*. It is at "the Black Swan" hotel in Nottingham that Tom Brangwen takes the young Anna Lensky on market day (*R*, 82:5). A Black Swan hotel existed at Goose Gate in Nottingham in Lawrence's time (*R*, 503). Lawrence replied on 31 August 1924: "I'm sorry about Miss Skinner and her new novel, she'd be so disappointed. But I don't think I want to re-write another" (v. 113). Skinner herself had informed Lawrence, in a letter written on 28 August, that she had had to re-work "Black Swans" and that "it wanted it" (v. 123 n. 1). She had also asked whether she could dedicate her novel to him and noted effusively that in his writing of *The Boy* he had "*brought it all out* like a magician" (v. 123 n. 1). In response to a request from Skinner, Lawrence wrote "Preface to *Black Swans*," at the end of 1924, relying on his memory of the novel, but informed her on 3 January 1925 that she'd "be better *without* an introduction by" him (v. 190, and n. 1). The "Preface" was not used and Lawrence's advice here indicates that his view was probably as important as Skinner's and the publisher's in this decision.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence's suggestion was, at least in part, based on the fact that he had not seen the novel since his reading of the early manuscript in 1922 while in Western Australia. It is not surprising, therefore, that his "Preface" dealt "mostly about *The Boy in the Bush*" (*DG*, 221). The "Preface" has not been included in the recently published Cambridge edition *Introductions and Reviews* (2005), and while this omission is justified by the editors, on the basis that it already appears in the Cambridge edition of *The Boy in the Bush*,<sup>8</sup> at Appendix vi, it would also have been logical and convenient to have re-published it in the volume which collects all of Lawrence's other similar writings.

It was some time before Lawrence read the published version of *Black Swans* and in the intervening months he remained optimistic about Skinner's abilities, wishing her every

<sup>7</sup> David Ellis observes that "either Mollie Skinner or her publisher must have decided that *Black Swans* would do better without a preface by Lawrence" (*DG*, 221).

<sup>8</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Introductions and Reviews*, eds., N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. lix.



success with it, offering to “write an introduction to [her] third novel,” and also urging her to write her “*mother’s* novel” (v. 245-246). Eventually, however, for Skinner, came the blow. After informing her on 28 August 1925 that he “had been waiting all summer” for a copy (v. 292), Lawrence wrote six months later, on 10 April 1926, well after the novel’s publication: “I have put off writing to you because I was sad about *Black Swans*. It was too much of a cinema piece and stayed on the surface, and I wanted so much to like it and then really I didn’t” (v. 419). He had already told Middleton Murry that the novel was “conceited slipshod nonsense” (v. 351). Lawrence had, by this time, become involved in another of Skinner’s works, “The Hand,” albeit with declining faith in her abilities. He gave only qualified praise for “The Hand” which she had submitted to Murry’s *The Adelphi* (v. 419), and omitted to tell her that he had re-written “the first four pages” (v.351). Lawrence also cautioned that for *Men Are We*, yet another novel of Skinner’s which she must have referred to in correspondence, she should “not let it fly into too much dramatics” (v. 419). Nevertheless, Lawrence ended his letter about *Black Swans* kindly: “One day we shall surely see you again, either in Australia or Europe” (v. 420). They were never to meet again, but this letter points to his affection for Skinner and his continuing interest in Australia. On 24 September 1926, Lawrence wrote his last letter to another Australian acquaintance, Willem Siebenhaar, whose translation of the Dutch novel *Max Havelaar* (1927) Lawrence had encouraged and promoted, and also provided with an introduction.<sup>9</sup> This letter reveals that Siebenhaar was making enquiries about “serial sales” for *Black Swans*, on behalf of Mollie Skinner (v. 542). It is testament to Lawrence’s integrity towards Skinner that, in spite of his disappointment with her novel, he conveyed nothing of this to Siebenhaar, replying instead that “[Jonathan] Cape would be delighted if Molly (sic) Skinner could get the Atlantic Monthly prize” (v. 542). It is against this background of affection for Skinner and frustration at her work that Lawrence, just over two years later towards the end of 1928, became involved in another of her manuscripts, doubtless apprehensive, but apparently stimulated enough to insert passages of his own creation into her text. Meanwhile, Australia remained in his consciousness.

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence’s “Introduction” to William Siebenhaar’s translation, while a consequence of his meeting the author during his visit to Australia, does not engage Australia. This collaboration is discussed in Paul Eggert, “The Dutch-Australian Connection: Willem Siebenhaar, D. H. Lawrence, *Max Havelaar* and *Kangaroo*.” *Australian Literary Studies*, 21:1 (2003), pp. 3-19.

*"Lady Chatterley's Lover" and Regeneration in Australia*

Lawrence is famous for his pronouncements on the nature of the regenerative potential of sex. In "A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover," he continues to advocate the primacy of "blood contact," reflected in much of his writings, as well as a "phallic rather than a sexual regeneration" (*LCL*, 327:37; 328:6-7), which Constance Chatterley and Mellors achieve through their "phallic hunting out" (*LCL*, 247:33). England, symbolised by Clifford, with his obsessive need "to keep industry alive[...]more industry, like a madness" (*LCL*, 214:20-21), is alien to Mellor's vision. As consequence of Mellors's regenerative "phallic hunting out" Constance falls pregnant, and wonders whether she and Mellors might begin a new life abroad: "We can go to another country, shall we? To Africa or Australia. Shall we?" (*LCL*, 215:34-35). Mellors, in typically Lawrentian fashion, is ambivalent. He has, like his creator, experience of the colonies, and explains that the human, social element remains the problem, *particularly* (and we are reminded of Somers's similar attitude to Australia in *Kangaroo*) in the most distant of colonies: "Because when I feel the human world is doomed, has doomed itself by its own mingy beastliness—then I feel the colonies aren't far enough" (*LCL*, 220:27-29). This forms a neat conclusion to Lawrence's published engagements with Australia begun with "The Vicar's Garden" in 1907, and particularly his first novel, the *White Peacock*. In that novel, the Australian bush is similarly remote. Annable, Lawrence's first gamekeeper, apparently and conveniently disappears from civilisation, is "supposed to have died in the [Australian] bush" (*WP*, 151:4-5). However, whereas Annable's unexpected and uncomfortable return sees Lawrence perpetuating nineteenth-century assumptions about a remote and disruptive Australia, Mellors's unwillingness to travel to Australia disturbs later contemporary (and Lawrence's) assumptions that Australia held the possibility of regeneration. Lawrence's second gamekeeper, Mellors knows, like Lawrence, that even in the remotest of continents, Australia, one can not escape modern humanity.

*"Eve in the Land of Nod"*

Despite the ambivalence towards Australia expressed by Mellors in *Lady Chatterley*, Lawrence, in a final, unpublished involvement with Mollie Skinner, through his additions

to her “Eve in the Land of Nod,” reveals that he again saw some regenerative possibility in Australia. Skinner describes in her autobiography how she involved Lawrence:

Two years passed before another letter came and that was the last. To explain it: After living as it were in the third dimension of this strange, still almost unknown country north of the south-west, I finished *Eve in the Land of Nod*, and not in the least knowing that Lawrence was strained almost beyond endurance, physically by consuming illness and mentally by vitriolic criticism, sent it to him, asking if he cared to take it on as he had *The Boy*. I confessed he was right about *Black Swans*. It was a failure too, commercially, though Edward Garnett had said it was so damned damned good as well as so damned damned bad, and though the critics had called it ‘a book of unusual quality’ and said ‘Here is Empire in the making, swift movement, reality and romance’ [...].<sup>10</sup>

The “last” reply from Lawrence that Skinner refers to is dated 3 December 1928 (vii. 36), but it is not clear exactly when she sent her manuscript to him. The reference to the Biblical Land of Nod embodied in Skinner’s title, drawn from Genesis (4, 13-16), a land east of Eden where Cain was banished to, would have been familiar to Lawrence through his knowledge of the Bible, and its resonance in Australia, also a site of banishment, would have been appealing to him. Lawrence’s reply to Skinner was warm, but his criticism of her latest creative effort was trenchant and unambiguous. In light of his disappointment with *Black Swans*, he must have felt it would be a lost cause: “I can’t do with it as I did with *Boy in the Bush* – that was a *tour de force* which one can do once, but not twice,” he wrote, although he conceded that the book “has good points” (vii. 36). Surprisingly, however, Lawrence, made extensive edits to the typescript he received from Skinner, and marking virtually all of its 414 pages.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Lawrence persevered to the end out of loyalty to Skinner, or in the hope that at some point, he might strike gold and become captivated as he had with her “The House of Ellis.” Paul Eggert observes that Lawrence went to “very considerable trouble” over his “‘novelistic’ interventions” in the text which

<sup>10</sup> Skinner, *The Fifth Sparrow*, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup> M. L. Skinner, “Eve in the Land of Nod,” copy of typescript made by The Library Board of Western Australia on 7 January 1982. I am grateful to Paul Eggert for allowing me to examine his copy of the typescript.

included the insertion of “passages of passion or introspection,” and an initial effort to turn the novel into a third person narrative (*BB*, li), which culminated in Lawrence’s advice that she revert to her original first person narrative (*viii*. 36).<sup>12</sup> Eggert observes that the typescript “has been rearranged, cut and pasted, and parts of it discarded,” and that “DHL’s alterations are autograph, but included some pages, in the third person and with a few corrections in his hand, which DHL may have had typed” (*BB*, li and nn. 119, 120). Looking back over Lawrence’s writing life from this point, it appears that Lawrence was a compulsive collaborator. Eggert notes that Lawrence “was a participant in a wide range of literary collaborations,” which were not “peripheral” but were “part and parcel” of his overall project.<sup>13</sup> His involvements with other authors include complete re-writes, such as his “appropriation” of an essay by Luis Quintanilla, his more collaborative revisions to Frederick Carter’s astrological writing and his 1909-10 collaborations in short fiction with Louie Burrows early in his career, as well as his derivations and adaptations which arose from his re-shaping of material by Helen Corke and Jessie Chambers.<sup>14</sup> In this context it is also useful to note the stimulus provided by Lawrence’s translation of Giovanni Verga’s *Mastro-Don Gesualdo*, which I discussed in chapter 9. With “Eve,” therefore, Lawrence was continuing his life long predilection for involving himself with other authors.

The first page of the typescript worked over by Lawrence is numbered “3” and here Skinner discards “the man dying in the buggy” which Lawrence refers to in his letter, and which he said had “no point” (*iv*. 37). This page shows the first of Lawrence’s interventions, his insertion of the third person “the new nurse” in place of Skinner’s first person “me” (“ELN,” 3). He maintains this throughout the text. More significant, however, are the half a dozen or so noteworthy passages in Lawrence’s autograph which I will explore below. On the whole, these lend a lyricism to Skinner’s otherwise flattish prose. Lawrence, while leaving her plot largely intact, injects a personal, almost autobiographical flavour into the novel. This personal element provides a further clue to Lawrence’s decision to re-engage with Skinner’s work, and why he could not throw his whole weight behind it. By mid-1928 Lawrence was urgently seeking a cure for his

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<sup>12</sup> The handwriting is, for the most part, typified by insertions to the typescript. These appear to be very similar to insertions in Lawrence’s hand visible in other autograph manuscripts such as that of *Kangaroo*, held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Lawrence’s insertions have, in many instances, been overwritten by another hand, apparently Skinner’s, principally in order to re-write the novel from Lawrence’s third person back to Skinner’s original first person.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Eggert, “D. H. Lawrence and Literary Collaboration” *Etudes Lawrenciennes*, 3, (1988), pp. 153, 161.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157, 158, 160

tuberculosis. His health was an abiding concern. Just over a week before his letter to Skinner he wrote that he had “bad bronchial trouble, and cough” (vii. 33). At a hotel in the French Alps he was asked to leave because of his coughing (*DG*, 421-422). It is, therefore, highly likely that Lawrence’s interest in Skinner’s novel lay, at least in part, in the fact that the central character, Evelyn Leigh, is a hospital matron, treating “pneumonia patients” (“ELN,” 8), ill like himself. His interest would have been further aroused because the matron ministers to a remote mining community in outback Western Australia, country reminiscent of the regenerative north-west in *The Boy in the Bush*. Lawrence’s first major intervention in “Eve” occurs in a passage he inserted within Skinner’s text, which she wrote as:

‘Get me the brandy, Mr Sandyman,’ I said quickly.

‘This man must have a stimulant.’

‘Doctor, ordered no brandy, nurse.’

Without looking at him, but aware that he and all the other men’s eyes were on my face, I said:

‘Call me matron and ring up the hotel and order a bottle of Three Star brandy to be sent down at once.’

‘He had to obey me, and to give him his due, he was always polite and agreeable.’ (“ELN,” 10-11)

After “brandy to be sent down at once” and before “He had to obey me,” Lawrence inserted in his own hand:

Now that Evelyn had put on the white overall and cap of this calling, she looked like the shrouded, eternal, evasive woman of all time, of any time, a nun, shadowy, shrouding a burning piratical heart. Yet her eyes laughed – or were ready to laugh – always; but her face – well you did not learn anything about her from her face. It was cryptic. Yesterday it had seemed just the ordinary physiognomy of a good looking girl of about four and twenty, chalk-white with painted eyebrows like the eyebrows on a canvas; the lashes had seemed put in with black fingers; and the mouth painted by the devil in a fit of absent mindedness, a red mouth full of

[word illegible] and kindness, yet with bitterness in it: a trifle malicious.  
 ("ELN," 10)

This is Lawrence carrying out his injunction to Skinner: "Don't make your Nurse Leigh quite so sprightly" (*vii*. 37). It is also a gesture towards more fully creating the central character who was hitherto one-dimensional and not fully realised. Under Lawrence's hand, Evelyn becomes more. She has devoted her life to the service of the sick but can administer strong medicine, is motivated not only by "kindliness," but by "bitterness" as well. She now displays some of the "empowered feminine" qualities which had long fascinated Lawrence. Taking the cue perhaps from her name, Lawrence imagines Evelyn as a "shrouded, eternal, evasive woman of all time," a female archetype, the Eve of the Bible.

In Lawrence's next major intervention, he re-wrote a passage in which Skinner evokes Evelyn's feelings towards her male patients. Here is Skinner's original passage which is completely crossed through by Lawrence:

I became saturated with my patients, yet still remained the healthy unit.  
 Their wandering spirits rested on me but my feet automatically found their way. While I sponged their burning flesh and groped after their wandering minds, took their temperatures and calculated the germs in their blood, I weighed and measured all their chances up and pitted my strength and what remained of their strength against the germs that consumed and gripped them. They were no longer men, but helpless, dumb things incapable of aggression or judgment. And thus I loved them. Healthy, virile men I scarcely knew, but these sick fellows with their querulous airs and helpless smiles gripped my heart. I suffered for them going to bed[...]. ("ELN," 23)

With Lawrence himself ill, engaged in his own "life-battle," we can imagine his empathy with these "sick fellows." Here is Lawrence's insertion:

This was just what she wanted. She was so unhappy she had come to the land of Nod wishing to escape into unfocussed country, to evade her

focussed condition; she pined with her sorry plight. Yet because of the untoward circumstances behind her, she hugged it close, and found peace for the moment. Saturated with her patients, their wandering spirits resting on her, pitting her strength and what remained of *their* strength against the germs that consumed and gripped them, she became absorbed in the great life-battle. These men were no longer healthy, virile animals, but helpless sick things, with querulous airs and hopeless smiles, incapable of aggression or judgment. Especially she became absorbed in Jim. As the days went on she became inexplicably happy when near him. A sigh would consume her: “Je suis contente!” And a profound sweetness would rise in her as though an angel had brushed an unseen flower and released its essence. In this way she suffered gladly. Going to bed – when she *could* get to bed – . (“ELN,” 23)

This is lively, engaging prose and several Lawrentian hallmarks are evident. It is also rather moving. There is something of the sick Lawrence in “Jim,” who now attracts particular attention from Evelyn. Between Jim, the sick man, and Evelyn there is a sacred bond, inducing contentment in Evelyn, so that she “suffered gladly” in his service. Lawrence italicises occasionally for greater impact and draws on his knowledge of French, as he does throughout his own novels.

Just as Lawrence fleshes out Evelyn more fully, so he does Jim, who survives his illness. Lawrence inserts:

Every one loved Jim – all his mates. Two or three were always hanging round the place waiting for him. They would all ask him to drink, and then suggest that he camp with them, individually. Not altogether disinterestedly perhaps. They got a good lot out of him, and besides, he was a “sport”; he had that attraction for men that comes from a courageous, emotional nature; he was silently sympathetic, and always did and said the right thing at the right moment. And then he had his pension of twenty-five shillings a week, the Government’s compensation for his mortal hurt – and that was extraordinarily useful as a lever to get stores with. ‘There you are, Mr McFee,’ they would say to the storekeeper,

‘I’m camping up with Jim, and if we can’t scrape up a bit o’ dust to settle with you later, there’s always Jim’s pension.’ (“ELN,” 40)

Later in the novel, it is Lawrence who powerfully evokes Evelyn’s feeling of isolation in the remote mining community, inserting:

Evelyn began to count over her friends, for a sense of the loneliness of this land crept into her bones. There was the doctor, and Mrs Shorter, and Jim who made her heart ache, and McAndrew, and Ned Crookshanks and the patients and the odds and ends of women and children, and the blacks. Yes, it was dreadfully lonely in the land of Nod, with the cast-out citizenship of earth. She had killed no Abel, and yet she was, a fugitive and a wanderer in the waste places, living with fugitives and wanderers, ministering to their needs. Evelyn cried to Destiny, lifting her hands: “My lot is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out, and Thy face is hidden from me.’

The horse went gingerly, picking his way; and it seemed to her that out of the great open radiance of blue, the Lord smote her with a great love-hunger, a flame of love, and she murmured: ‘I will do thy will.’

Suddenly she laughed, for an old kangaroo, with a baby hanging out of her pouch, long legs dangling down, for it had jumped in a hurry, stood still hopelessly, queerly looking at her. Evelyn flicked her whip, and the kangaroo-mother turned and leapt away. (“ELN,” 95-96)

In this passage we have a tantalising sense that Lawrence is beginning to really get inside Skinner’s novel, and write some serious Australian fiction himself, and re-engaging some of the themes he explored in *The Boy*. Lawrence evokes an Australian sky as a “great open radiance of blue.” Australia, The Land of Nod, is the end of the line for the “cast-out citizenship of earth,” just as Jack Grant in *The Boy in the Bush* is “sent out” to remote Australia (*BB*, 19:5). Lawrence attaches, but reverses, the same biblical reference to Evelyn as he does to Jack. Evelyn “had killed no Abel,” while Jack “was a sinner, a Cain” (*BB*, 10:14). Lawrence undercuts Evelyn’s existential loneliness as she rides through the bush, as Jack does, through the sudden and comical appearance of a kangaroo. The



“kangaroo-mother” also recalls the “delicate mother kangaroo” of the poem “Kangaroo” (*CP*, 392). The sudden intrusion of the kangaroo “queerly looking at her,” changes Evelyn’s mood, and just as in “Kangaroo,” where the “antipodal Kangaroo” cannot be unseated (*CP*, 392), the kangaroo confronting Evelyn in “Eve” represents the pervasive, timeless spirit of Australia, at once reassuring and elusive, and antithetical to civilised human society.

There are several sections of the typescript, pages 173-174, pages 252-255, page 260 and the subsequent unnumbered page, and pages 294, 396A [sic] and 296B, which as Paul Eggert notes (*BB*, li), appear to have been typed either by, or for Lawrence. Throughout much of the typescript it is possible to discern Skinner’s original typed first person “my,” then Lawrence’s initially preferred handwritten “her” and finally Skinner’s restoration of “my” as, for example appears on page 301. The typescript sections referred to above, however, are typed in Lawrence’s initially preferred third person, and contain only the one amendment back to first person, indicating that Skinner was amending a Lawrence typescript rather than her own. Further indicators are that the typeface for these pages differs from that found in the typescript as a whole, and stylistically, the passages are Lawrentian. Finally, there are two amendments in these pages in Lawrence’s hand, for example, where he corrects the spelling of “Evelyn Leyn” to “Evelyn Leigh” (“ELN,” 173, 296b). Lawrence’s resort to typing suggests, at the very least, that he extensively re-wrote Skinner’s material at these points, or, that he inserted entirely new material of his own. In this discussion I will focus on the first and fourth sections. This Lawrence material is highly introspective, and, as with some of his other contributions, further develops Evelyn’s relationship with Jim, and Skinner’s idea of Nod – exploring its metaphysical dimension and the lessons this holds for Evelyn. The first section typed by Lawrence, and excluding Skinner’s hand-written minor edits, is reproduced below:

So he strode up now, and stood before Evelyn, the horror he had for them strangling his breath, all mixed up with the love he had for her. He wanted to warn her against them far more vehemently than Crookshanks had, and he wanted to take her in his arms at the same time and kiss her. He grew pale, and Evelyn, feeling the strange excitement he was in, put her hands on his shoulders. He put his up, and lifted hers away, trying to hide his agonised eyes. His emotions panted in his chest, his raw and

wounded heart almost ceased to function, his knees felt sinking beneath him. His love for this woman was amazing to him, yet he could say nothing – it was agony. He had thought all these terrible emotions a man can feel had been blown away by the bullet that took off his ear. He no longer wanted to care for anyone, he no longer desired to feel the hot blood surging through his veins, he resolutely turned his back on passionate possibilities. He was a man hunted by the Hound of Heaven, hunted into Nod. He did not even want to feel distaste and disgust for blacks... His distorted perceptions were overbalanced. He walked away.

He would avoid Evelyn Leigh, he would not become enmeshed in her nets, because he felt he could not take her; therefore why interfere with her. He would keep away and repress his desire for her by hiding it even from himself. He panted and turned, and striding away, he tortured his martyred soul. But one can drown one's sorrows if one is resolute. Jim, being strictly human, being in Nod, went to the Redvers' Arms and called for drinks. There were "good fellows" at Silver Eye. Jim was popular. He leant over the bar and made a joke and laughed uproariously. Blue Annie took his chin between her finger and thumb and shook his face; but she could not shake the ice that froze round his heart. ("ELN," 173-174)

In the above passage Lawrence characterises Nod as a sort of crucible where emotions and relationships are burnt off, leaving the individual in an elemental, solitary purity. Jim "turned his back on passionate possibilities" ("ELN," 173), he seeks solitude rather than union with Evelyn. Jim's complex ambivalence towards Evelyn is typically Lawrentian. Jim's fear of being "enmeshed," continues an anxiety in Lawrence's writing which extends back at least as far as *Sons and Lovers*, where, for example, Paul Morel in agony over his feelings for Miriam, finally withdraws from her, saying in the final scene: "you want to put me in your pocket" (*SL*, 461:26-27). It is remarkable to find Lawrence still concerned with this theme at the end of his life.

Lawrence's interventions in the long passage above also provide insight into Lawrence's late thinking about race. In a rather strange and clumsy passage, Jim does "not even want to feel distaste and disgust for blacks" ("ELN," 173). This apparently

backhanded insult suggests, however, that Jim, in his purified state, is devoid of wider contemporary racist attitudes. Lawrence, his idea of Aborigines drawn from anthropology, was uncertain about this element, as he was about other “real” elements in the novel. His letter to Skinner giving his reasons for not collaborating with her shows that her entire project was largely foreign to him: “And you can see I know nothing of gold-camps, never saw a black boy except in the streets of Sydney, and know nothing of medicine” (*vii*. 36). Nevertheless, Lawrence, in ascribing a utopian quality to the Australian bush community, yet another vision of his *Rananim*, sees the inhabitants as essentially good, and as living in a society where Aborigines and Europeans live together harmoniously. He writes:

But Nod. What message had Nod for Evelyn? Something evasive, ungetatable. Surely exorable fate had reason. Bits of poems, the underlyings of the meaning of all art, all religion, they held even here, in Nod.

He who cast thee down into the field,  
He knows about it all: He knows. He Knows.

Here even in Nod, east of Eden, were people held by threads in God’s hand. Shearer, that man who died at Journey’s End – she had told him: Yes, Yes, I’ll do it for you. What? She sat up listening to her mind. She had no idea, but deep deep down within her she felt one of God’s cords pulling. She would do something for the dead man, out here in Nod. Jim! It was absurd to have this feeling for Jim, quite, quite absurd. But he who cast thee down into the field, He knows about it all. He knows. He knows. Doctor Thornton! Ah, here was good in the land. And there also was good in Sam, in all the men, even in Mrs. Arker, half black, even in Wadji all black. They all possessed the fine virtues: courage, courtesy, kindness, humour!

That was the message of Nod! Reason above all reasoning. Hope beyond all hope. A certain happiness in the joy of life, even in Nod. Work, worship of strange gods standing before the Infinite God, Love joy; but

little peace. For always between them and peace stood the angel with the [text ends]. (“ELN,” 294)

One of the lessons for Evelyn is that there is “good” to be found “even in Mrs. Arker, half black, even in Wadji all black. They all possessed the fine virtues: courage, courtesy, kindness, humour!” Lawrence also continues to emphasise references to “Nod,” whose message is “evasive ungetatable.” (“ELN,” 294), pointing further to Lawrence’s delineating a utopian community, whereas Skinner scarcely mentions Nod in her text. The passage above also shows that Lawrence’s continuing re-working of the Bible.

In the next major passages in the “Lawrence” typescripts Evelyn is granted the possibility of a passionate fulfilment. Mr Shorter is ready for “flirtation” with Evelyn, which contrasts with Jim’s anxiety, discussed earlier:

[excision from the typescript] finding herself strangely neglected, turned round and started to flirt with Mr. Shorter. She was young, she was intensely human, and there is no nonsense about it, one must love someone in this world or go mad. One must love something, even if it is nothing but God, and Evelyn felt that the Lord had hidden his face from her. She could not love such an unkind God.

Mr. Shorter was kind and warm and well carried. He had charming manners and he was ready for sympathy and a mild flirtation. He cut his finger at this time deeply enough to bring him down for dressing. He came not in ordinary hours. Of course not. He was the manager. It wouldn’t do for him to sit on the stool in “Outpatients” waiting his turn; even Sam Brady, who was a Union man, would admit that. So Mr. Shorter came alone, and he was no longer the king in Egypt, but a little boy with a hurt hand. His finger was easy to dress, but it took time daily to do it, for it had some foreign substance in it and had to be soaked. Sitting there he would look at Evelyn Leigh in his protective, masculine way, and in his deep but light clear brown eyes mischief floated. Her colour would come up like a pink carnation then. He told her so and made other little remarks like that; and one day, when she hurt him, it hurt her.

She felt the pain ooze from her heart as though it had been squeezed – he said spontaneously, kissing her hand, ‘Darling.’

Yet he was sorry to see her suffer because she had hurt him. And both pretended he hadn’t spoken. After that his touch, or was it her touch – was always gentle and soothing, lingering. His finger was better. He was known to be [this section of typescript ends here]. (“ELN,” 396A (sic), 296B)

It can be seen that Lawrence worked hard on certain sections of Skinner’s typescript, performing the role of editor and, sporadically, as shown above, co-author. His overall suggestion was that Skinner should “put in more of the *ugliness* – and the pain of the ugliness” (vii. 37), and this is evident in his depiction of Jim’s struggle with his relationship with Evelyn. Yet Lawrence was modest about his efforts. “There, you won’t thank me for this unasked-for advice which you get in place of more strenuous help,” he wrote (vii. 37).

On the final page of Skinner’s typescript of “Eve in the Land of Nod” Lawrence reminds Skinner of “Nod” the name of the land she was attempting to create. Skinner wrote: “Drive on, Mr. McAndrew.” He put the clutch in, we slid away.” Lawrence added: “slid out of the land of Nod!” (“ELN,” 420). Lawrence’s final change to Skinner’s text occurs in the third last line where he changed Skinner’s first person “I” to the third person “Evelyn,” the last of his conversions to third person (“ELN,” 420). This concludes Lawrence’s fictional engagement with Australia.

Examination of the typescript of “Eve” reveals that overall, as Eggert observes, there is a “clear distinction” between the “rearranging or restructuring” which resulted from Lawrence’s intervention in “Eve in the Land of Nod,” and the “genuine re-creation” which resulted in his producing *The Boy in the Bush* (BB, li). Nevertheless, Lawrence’s selective interventions in “Eve in the Land of Nod,” although relatively infrequent, are sufficiently developed to demonstrate Lawrence’s enduring interest in Australia. Lawrence’s interventions are all the more poignant because they are amongst the last examples of his fiction *per se*. David Ellis reports that “The Blue Moccasins” was “the last short story Lawrence ever completed” and that it was written between 9 and 26 July 1928 (DG, 433, 560). By 2 September 1928, Lawrence had completed *The Escaped Cock* (DG, 424). While it is not known when he received Skinner’s typescript, it is reasonable to speculate that Lawrence worked on it *after* he had finished *The Escaped Cock*, over the two months between 2 September, when he had finished that story, and 3 December 1928, when he

returned Skinner's typescript of "Eve," with his amendments and additions (vii. 36). Skinner had unwittingly pitched her typescript at Lawrence precisely as his own fictional output was receding, eliciting what appears to be his second last fictional writing. By October 1929 Lawrence had written his final major work, *Apocalypse*, published posthumously in 1931 (DG, 565).

*P. R. Stephensen and Australian Bushwhackers, and "Introduction to Pansies"*

Lawrence's friendship with Australian publisher and writer, P. R. Stephensen, was his final involvement with an Australian. The friendship stimulated Lawrence to further commentary about the nature of a country which had aroused intense and contradictory responses. This is recorded in his letters to Stephensen. The relationship extended for a little less than a year, from 18 December 1928 (two weeks after Lawrence had posted his annotations to Skinner's typescript of "Eve"), when Stephensen visited Lawrence at Bandol in France, until Stephensen's final letter to Lawrence on 31 October 1929. In much of his correspondence with Stephensen, Lawrence reveals his characteristic ambivalence towards Australia and Australians. He praises the energy and potential of Australians, on the one hand, while on the other, he is troubled by what he sees as naiveté and carelessness in the Australian character. Stephensen greatly respected Lawrence and his work, but also criticised him freely, and in *The Bushwhackers* (1929), Stephensen contradicted what he saw as the largely negative view of Australia which Lawrence had presented in *Kangaroo*. Lawrence derived stimulation from Stephensen's youthful energy, and obtained considerable benefit from his boldness and skill as a publisher, but quickly saw that the younger man's strengths did not lie with literature. Both men enjoyed the attributes and connections possessed by the other, and the relationship was mutually beneficial. Ultimately, when their interests no longer coincided, they moved quietly apart.

Stephensen's involvement with Lawrence is documented by Craig Munro in *Wild Man of Letters*. It began with his reading of *Kangaroo*, soon after its publication, and he was greatly impressed. Stephensen, in an introduction to the first part of a review of *Kangaroo*, by an Australian socialist, R. S. Ross, published in the Australian labour newspaper, the *Daily Standard* on 22 December 1923, wrote that the novel had "burst like

a bomb.”<sup>15</sup> Stephensen had been a member of the Brisbane branch of the Communist Party of Australia since 1921, and revelled in the revolutionary potential of his job as a teacher at the somewhat proper Ipswich Grammar School in Queensland.<sup>16</sup> While still an undergraduate, Stephensen developed a vision for the political and social renewal of Australia. He was disillusioned with democracy and a 1921 article in the college journal *Argo* lampooned his Russian vision for the “regeneration of Australia.”<sup>17</sup> Lawrence’s repudiation of democracy in *Kangaroo*, and his criticism of Australian society, therefore, resonated strongly with Stephensen. And *Kangaroo*, with its polarity between left and right wing politics, seems to have opened Stephensen’s eyes to the polarity which had emerged in inter-war politics. Four days after he introduced the 1923 review of *Kangaroo* in the *Daily Standard* Stephensen wrote of the contemporary political contest as being a choice between “fascism or proletarian dictatorship.”<sup>18</sup> Lawrence’s examination of politics in *Kangaroo*, however, is exploratory and ultimately condemnatory of all political solutions. Political objectives of all persuasions are repudiated in *Kangaroo*. Stephensen’s excited but narrow response to the novel reveals his largely political concerns at the time, and the limits of his critical appreciation. It also points to the fundamental difference between the two men, which accounts for their eventual drifting apart.

In the footsteps of two close friends, Stephensen won the Queensland Rhodes Scholarship for 1924, and in August of that year, sailed for England.<sup>19</sup> He came to the attention of Lawrence through his involvement with Fanfrolico Press. Fanfrolico was established in London’s Bloomsbury in 1926 by the Australian writer Jack Lindsay, and its “Dionysian spirit” was underwritten philosophically and financially by his successful artist father, Norman Lindsay.<sup>20</sup> Stephensen and Jack Lindsay had known each other in Brisbane, and before long, Stephensen offered his services to the new venture.<sup>21</sup> By April 1928 Fanfrolico enjoyed considerable success, based on the appeal of Norman Lindsay’s illustrations and the high quality of the limited editions produced by the press. In August Fanfrolico launched the first volume of *The London Aphrodite*, with mostly Australian content, but it also included contributions by the Irish author, Liam O’Flaherty and the

<sup>15</sup> P. R. Stephensen quoted in Craig Munro, *Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P. R. Stephensen* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> *Argo* quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Stephensen quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49.

Welsh author, Rhys Davies.<sup>22</sup> It was soon afterwards that the new journal was brought to Lawrence's attention. On 26 November 1928 Lawrence wrote to the bookseller Charles Lahr, lamenting that, amongst other things, editions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* were being pirated in America. Lawrence concluded his letter: "I don't know anything about *The London Aphrodite* or Fanfrolico Press – am glad to have this copy of No 2" (vii. 31).

At this time Lawrence had become greatly immersed in his own painting. Between November 1928 and March 1929 he painted six works, two of which, *Renascence of Men* and *Spring* embodied male nudity. David Ellis sees the male nudes as evidence of Lawrence's "revived"[...] yearning for male comradeship" (DG, 458-459). Certainly, around this period, Lawrence appears to have derived great stimulus and strength from the friendships he had with male writers such as Aldous Huxley, Rhys Davies and Stephensen. Lawrence's friendship with Stephensen occurred through Jack Lindsay, who had become aware of Lawrence as a painter. In October 1928, Lindsay met Frieda, and Guiseppe Orioli, who was printing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in Florence. Lindsay recalls that: "Orioli showed me a couple of water colours by Lawrence that he had, and I remarked on their interest and suggested that an exhibition should be held in London. I also suggested a book of reproductions."<sup>23</sup> Lindsay thought no further of this, but Lawrence wrote to Lindsay: "Orioli wrote me from Florence that the Fanfrolico Press might do a portfolio of reproductions of my pictures" and that he'd "heard of Fanfrolico from Rhys Davies" (vii. 60). Lawrence, however, formed a somewhat dubious first impression of Lindsay and Stephensen, independently of Davies. Writing on 16 December 1928 to Laurence Pollinger, who worked for Lawrence's London agent Curtis Brown, Lawrence wrote:

I shall probably see the man Stephensen down here. I don't think much of the *London Aphrodite* – but I hear they are rich Australians, these Lindsays and Stephensen – and therefore a bit colonial and ramshackle. If they do the portfolio I expect it will be a limited edition at two guineas or something. But I hear they are doubtful payers – so I shall turn them over to you to look after them, if their plan materialises. (vii. 66)

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 3 1925-1930 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), p. 300.



Significantly, Lawrence, it appears, based upon his reading of the “No 2” edition (vii. 31), had formed a negative view of the *London Aphrodite* before he had met Stephensen. On the same day, however, he invited Rhys Davies to “bring Stephensen” for a visit (vii. 67). The visit was a great success and afterwards, on 20 December, Lawrence sent Stephensen “three doggerels for the *Aphrodite*” (vii. 77), although these were later rejected by Lindsay (vii. 77 n. 3). Davies had presumably related to Lawrence the general revelry indulged in by those, including himself, who were associated with Fanfrolico. Davies had been with Stephensen, Lindsay and Liam O’Flaherty in a riotous drunken celebration of the second edition of the *London Aphrodite* in October 1928, at which Lindsay received a broken thumb and bruised kidneys.<sup>24</sup> At this point, Lawrence, given his thought that Lindsay and Stephensen would be “a bit colonial and ramshackle” appears to have feared that he might be re-entering the “colonial hopelessness” of Australia experienced by his character Somers in *Kangaroo* (K. 83:25).

The two Australian colonials had also come to the attention of Aldous Huxley who had concluded that they were ripe for satire. Both Lindsay and Stephensen were lampooned by Huxley in his recently published *Point Counter Point* (1928). Lindsay was the inspiration for Willie Weaver, an idiotically anachronistic poet who is living “three centuries too late.”<sup>25</sup> Stephensen was derided as the debauched publisher Cuthbert Arkwright “the most drunken – on principle and for the love of art as well” who “made his living, ...by printing limited and expensive editions of the more scabrous specimens of the native and foreign literatures.”<sup>26</sup> We may infer that Huxley’s condemnation of Lindsay and Stephensen was at least partially motivated by their Australian nationality, although Weaver and Arkwright are not cast as Australian characters. Later in the novel Elinor reminds her husband Philip of “that awful Australian ship with the cockroaches,”<sup>27</sup> and while Elinor and Philip are driving down the Strand the narrator reports that “the two little churches protested against Australia House.”<sup>28</sup> These negative representations of Australia form part of a wider critique of the consequences of empire in the novel. Philip remarks as they pass through Whitehall at the comfort he feels at the bureaucrats “scribbling from

<sup>24</sup> Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Huxley quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> Huxley quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 195.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

morning till night” to produce “the British Empire.”<sup>29</sup> Huxley, therefore, implicates Australia in a negative portrayal of empire, much, as I discussed in chapter 11, as Virginia Woolf did shortly after him in *The Waves*. Huxley’s satire of Lindsay and Stephensen was motivated by a similar belief that Australian colonials contaminated the metropolitan heart of empire. Lawrence also appeared in *Point Counter Point* in the character of Mark Rampion, which he saw as “the most boring character in the book,” communicating his disappointment with the novel to Huxley in a letter of 28 October 1928 (vi. 601, 617 n. 2). Lawrence, however, seems to have been unaware of the inspiration provided by Lindsay and Stephensen, but this is understandable since they are not presented as Australian characters.

Lawrence did not, however, once he had met Stephensen, share Huxley’s view of the man, and he set aside his own earlier prejudices. On 18 December 1928, Stephensen and Rhys Davies arrived at Bandol in France for a two-day stay with Lawrence (vii. 70 n 3). Lawrence wrote enthusiastically the next day of the project to publish a “very *de luxe*” edition of his paintings, and that the Fanfrolico Press would “change into the Mandrake Press” with sounder financial backing (vii. 70-71). Far from appearing “ramshackle,” Stephensen made quite an impression on Lawrence. After talking well into the night Davies reports that Lawrence informed him that he could not sleep because ““the walls of the room still shook”” after Stephensen had retired.<sup>30</sup> Lawrence, it seems, did not allow his opinion of the *London Aphrodite* to intrude on his liking for Stephensen. Lawrence’s first letter to Stephensen after his visit is partly business and he went to considerable length to discuss the technicalities of colour reproduction for his book of paintings (vii. 78). Lawrence also displayed genuine warmth towards Stephensen: “I was glad you came. I was glad to see somebody young with a bit of energy and fearlessness. It’s *most* precious” (vii. 78). Lawrence and Stephensen shared their thoughts on ways of changing post-war society. Lawrence wrote to Stephensen: “We *must* make a hole in the bourgeois world which is the whole world of consciousness today” (vii. 79). Significantly, Lawrence drew attention to Stephensen’s nationality which he still saw as a liability. While Lawrence admired the Australian’s ability to marshal the necessary vigour for the publishing venture, in Lawrence’s view, Stephensen’s Australianness militated against his sustaining concentrated effort. Lawrence warned Stephensen that his energy was in danger of being

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>30</sup> Rhys Davies quoted in Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, p. 72.

dissipated amongst Bohemian “wasters” (vii. 79). Lawrence had explored what he thought to be this same tendency amongst Australians in *The Boy in the Bush*. When Jack Grant arrives in Western Australia, he is warned away from prankishness, carelessness and “wasters:”

It becomes a habit. You get a habit of going with rascals, and then you're done. Because in this country you'll find plenty of scamps, and plenty of wasters. And the sight of them is enough: nasty, low-down lot. [...]It's a great big country, and it needs men, *men*, not wasters. (*BB*, 21:27-38)

Lawrence concluded his letter to Stephensen with worldly advice for the younger man, reminding him of the dangers inherent in his Australian character:

If your mandrake is to grow, let him shove up under the walls of this prison-system, and bust them. But patience, patience all the time, even while one acts most strenuously, somewhere patience. I am determined, like Samson in the temple of Philistia, to pull the house down sooner or later and all I want is men to tug silently and constantly along with me. But you Australians seem to believe in squandering, which is a pity, because squandering, like drink, is only a form of evasion – a mere evasion of life. To live one has to live a life-long fight. (vii. 79)

In Lawrence's view, the Australian larrikin energy needed to be harnessed and guided correctly if it was to be effective. Lawrence found Jack Lindsay's work superficial, illustrating what he saw as another tendency in Australians, and he offered a further caution to Stephensen:

Jack Lindsay sent me his *Helen* and *Dionysos* – but oh! if you Australians didn't do it all so easy! It's as if you could eat a thousand dinners without ever swallowing one of them or having anything on your stomachs: everything just tasty. (vii. 117)

Lawrence's advice to Stephensen was, however, delivered with avuncular goodwill and he continued to warm to Stephensen. It's easy to see why. After his visit to Lawrence, Stephensen wrote a letter of adulation to Lawrence.<sup>31</sup> Here was a follower, a late disciple whom Lawrence hoped would work "along with" him (*vii.* 79). Stephensen was an Australian such as he had failed to find on his actual journey to the country – an Australian who was both independent-minded and fierce and yet who was prepared, so it seemed, to devote a great deal of energy to Lawrence and his work. Stephensen wrote on 21 December 1928: "You are one of the very few before whom I don't hesitate to make a fool of myself with a simple declaration of affection at 'first sight'" (*vii.* 91, n. 2). Stephensen was also beginning to embrace Lawrence's advice: "I know (or am beginning to know) that energy needs the discipline of patience," he wrote, assuring Lawrence that he wouldn't let "drunkenness" or "let pseudo-'Bohemianism'" destroy him (*vii.* 92 n. 2). Lawrence replied on 24 December: "Righto-O! I like you too" (*vii.* 91). Frieda's daughter, Barbara Weekley Barr confirms that Lawrence greatly enjoyed Stephensen's company, reporting that Lawrence even tried some subtle "matchmaking" between her and Stephensen.<sup>32</sup> There were, however, limits to Lawrence's praise of Stephensen. Barbara's account of Lawrence's critiquing a short story of Stephensen's reveals that even at this early stage, Lawrence did not see any great literary potential in Stephensen. She recalls that when Stephensen had finished reading a story "Lawrence demolished it for him at once" claiming it was "'false'" and that Stephensen "'is *not* an artist; he is a businessman.'" <sup>33</sup>

While Lawrence sought to ensure that his new friend did not stray too far into dissipation, he greatly valued Stephensen's zest. On 12 January 1929, he wrote enthusiastically to Laurence Pollinger of the prospect of his paintings being printed by Stephensen, and informed him that he would forward an introduction to Pollinger. Lawrence also made an explicit link between Stephensen's nationality and his vitality:

I shall send you the MS. of the introduction next week, and you can deal with Stephensen when he's ready. He's Australian – and I like him – he's got energy, and he seems to me straight – though people say Fanfrolico paid dilatorily. (*vii.* 131)

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 3, pp. 283-284.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

In the early summer of 1929 *The Paintings of D. H. Lawrence* appeared, not through the Fanfrolico Press, but under the new imprint of Stephensen's, The Mandrake Press, which had been established on 19 February 1929.<sup>34</sup> This was the press's first production (vii. 253). Lawrence, by this time clearly valued Stephensen as a friend as well as an important vehicle for his work. He presented Stephensen with one of his oils, *Accident in a Mine* (vii. 136), which was one of the paintings displayed by Dorothy Warren in her exhibition in 1929, all of which were depicted in *The Paintings*.

Before the publication of *The Paintings*, Lawrence sought to enlist Stephensen's assistance with his "poor *Pansies*," because the police had the manuscript for these poems (vii. 150). Ultimately it was Stephensen who lent the imprint of The Mandrake Press to the first full edition of *Pansies*, published just after Secker's censored edition, although the actual publisher was the bookseller Charles Lahr.<sup>35</sup> *Pansies* is of further interest because, in his "Introduction to *Pansies*," Lawrence makes reference to Aboriginal Australia. It is possible that Lawrence's friendship with Stephensen stimulated his earlier fascination with Sir James Frazer's anthropological studies of Australian Aborigines which had so impressed him years earlier, when he had read Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy*, in 1915 (ii. 470). Lawrence, in introducing his "handful of thoughts," as he calls *Pansies*, asserts that humanity's "roots are in the sensual, instinctive and intuitive body" and seeks to defend himself from charges of obscenity (CP, 417-418). He states that his objective is to "lift off the taboo" on "certain words, certain ideas" which otherwise lead to "a waste of sane human consciousness" (CP, 420). He deplores the taboos and strictures of every age and society. He cites "Swift's form of madness" his "maddened refrain: 'But—Celia, Celia, Celia shifts!'" as an example of "a poisoned mind" (CP, 419), while also pointing to the taboos of Aboriginal society. In an extraordinary passage which equates Aboriginal superstition with Swift's scatological fixations, Lawrence writes:

We are all savages, we all have taboos. The Australian black may have the kangaroo for his taboo. And then he will probably die of shock and terror if a kangaroo happens to touch him. Which is what I would call a purely unnecessary death. But modern men have even more dangerous taboos. To

<sup>34</sup> Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, pp. 88, 77.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

us, certain words, certain ideas are taboo, and they come upon us and we can't drive them away, we die or go mad with a degraded sort of terror. Which is what happened to Swift. (CP, 420)

Lawrence sees two diverse cultures as hamstrung by taboos. Moreover: "The kangaroo is a harmless animal," Lawrence concludes simply in his poem (CP, 420).

As Lawrence became more familiar with Stephensen's work, his earlier hope that Stephensen's inherent Australian energy, would challenge prevailing social conservatism and complacency was eroded. This is typical of Lawrence. He was prone to passionate enthusiasms, followed by equally passionate withdrawals. One might describe Lawrence's attitude to England, Australia, and America as a series of advances and retreats. Stephensen was Lawrence's last hope that an Australian voice might make an impression on the old world, might offer inspiration and signal the possibility of regeneration. Stephensen, however, failed to live up to Lawrence's expectations, just as Mollie Skinner had.

Gradually, Lawrence's view of Stephensen became clouded by his opinion of *The London Aphrodite*. Lawrence would have had strong grounds for being unimpressed with Jack Lindsay, who edited the magazine with Stephensen, and who attacked him in the first number of the *Aphrodite*. We can't be certain whether Lawrence read the first issue of the *Aphrodite* – he refers specifically only to numbers 2, 4 and 5. On the one hand, we may speculate that Stephensen had a copy of Number 1 with him when he visited Lawrence in December 1928, in order to impress him. On the other, however, it seems unlikely that, given its assault on Lawrence, Lawrence would not have referred to it explicitly. Lindsay attacked Lawrence at some length in the opening essay "The Modern Consciousness." Lindsay referred disparagingly to Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis as "mystics of the abdomen."<sup>36</sup> Lawrence would surely have been incensed by Lindsay's attack on his assertion of the senses over intellect, which lies at the heart of all of his writing:

Another propagandist, though opposed to the puritans of the intellect, is

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<sup>36</sup> *The London Aphrodite*, No. 1, August 1928, p. 6.

D. H. Lawrence. He is of the brood of Scriabin, and states clearly enough the case for torment: the itch to get back to the night of the unconscious, the primal plasm of instinct, the dark pit of the blood.<sup>37</sup>

Lindsay appears to be cleverly satirising Lawrence's often expressed interest in blood-consciousness, but he succeeds more in revealing his ignorance of the subtlety of Lawrence's celebration of the senses, and the way he explored primitive cultures to see how this might be achieved. As far back as 1923, in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence had written that "we can't go back to the savages" (*SCAL*, 22:127). Lawrence would surely have been annoyed at Lindsay's half-baked understanding, and infuriated by his jibe that he was a "propagandist." Lindsay also attacked Lawrence and T. S. Eliot as escapist:

The creative mind can only know itself creatively. That simplicity is the truth evaded by T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence equally. One seeks a neat escape into the parlours of 'intellect,' the other riotously burrows into the mind of the 'unconscious' – but both seek a ready-made approach to creativeness: a formula for life and art, an escape.<sup>38</sup>

Again Lindsay mocks Lawrence. We know that Lawrence didn't "think much of the *London Aphrodite*" (*vii*. 66). If he had read Lindsay in Number 1, this would surely have been an understatement. †

After Lawrence received a copy of the Number 4, February 1929 edition of the *Aphrodite*, the fourth out of six, he communicated his general disappointment with Stephensen to him. "You make quite a dash at me – poor Pommy with a beard," he wrote on 15 February (*vii*. 179). There are no references to Lawrence in Number 4 and Lawrence was presumably registering insults in the letter from Stephensen to which he was replying. The "pommy" insult, which Lawrence had dwelt on in *Kangaroo* (*K*, 147:20-40), and which I have already discussed, illustrates the often bitter dialectic between "British" and "Australian," which appears to have lain at the heart of Lawrence's and Stephensen's relationship. For his part, Lawrence also took issue with Stephensen's poem "Barrel-Organ

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Rhapsody,” also published in the Number 4 *Aphrodite*. The poem begins: “The Middle Class is the upperclass now/that England’s gone to seed;/Dividend-drawers are reaping the harvest/sown by the bulldog breed”,<sup>39</sup> – the “bulldog breed” being the traditional British worker. The poem concludes with: “But the blokes on the Dole are really the boys of/the famous bulldog breed.”<sup>40</sup> Lawrence debunked Stephensen’s assertion that the resurgence of British society lay with its proletariat, telling him that “the Working Man is not much of a British Bulldog anymore” (vii. 179).

Lawrence also told Stephensen that he feared for what he saw as Stephensen’s naive Australian “bushwhacker” ideology, finding it excessively “*impressed*” by the “business-men and intellectuals” who would “whack the bushwhacker into limbo” (vii. 179). Presumably, as a result of Stephensen’s visit in December 1928, Lawrence had become familiar with Stephensen’s use of the word “bushwhacker,” which was to form the basis of the title of Stephensen’s soon-to-be-published *The Bushwhackers: Sketches of Life in the Australian Outback*. Craig Munro states that Stephensen discussed *The Bushwhackers* with Lawrence at some stage, but does not offer a date.<sup>41</sup> After his exposure to the *Aphrodite*, Lawrence probably believed that *The Bushwhackers* would be light-weight. Munro aptly describes Lawrence’s view later of the *London Aphrodite* as “adolescently self-indulgent.”<sup>42</sup> Lawrence felt that Stephensen did not take his publishing work seriously enough. He told him that the struggle with the cultural elites was a full-time job. And that there was no time spare for womanising:

And you Australians want it quick and easy, and think that fiddling about with girls will do it. My God, if it would! Meanwhile you’ll merely be shoved aside, you Australians. You don’t *bite on* hard enough. All that silly twiddling with girls! – it isn’t even really sex. – I have the *Aphrodite* – and it’s very much that twiddling business – sticky and feeble. ...and *be wary* – in England, *always* be wary. It is not Australia, where none of the animals bite. (vii. 180)

<sup>39</sup> *The London Aphrodite*, No. 4, February 1929, p. 278.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>41</sup> Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, p. 79.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



Given his view of the *Aphrodite*, it is remarkable that Lawrence continued to bother with Stephensen. Also remarkable is Lawrence's warning that England is more vicious than Australia, where "none of the animals bite." Through the animal metaphor, Australia appears soft and innocent, compared to England. Lawrence continues the polarity which he established in the poem 'Kangaroo' where "the northern hemisphere" is inhabited by dangerous hunting animals, "foxes, stoats, and wolves," whereas Australia is inhabited by the benign "yellow antipodal Kangaroo," which is a "delicate mother" (CP, 392, 393). In Australia "nothing bites but insects and snakes and the sun/small life" (CP, 394). These, the poem suggests, are merely irritants, and inconsequential. For Lawrence, the England of 1929, however, where he still suffered the censorship of *Pansies* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, remained much as it had been during the "nightmare" of *Kangaroo*, a land of "male and female jackals" who have caused the "blood poisoning and mortification" of society, and whose "bite," therefore, is to be feared (K, 217:19-20). Lawrence saw Stephensen as being naïve and in danger of being "shoved aside" by this vicious England (vii. 180).

In the Number 5 issue of the *Aphrodite* Stephensen in "The Whirled Around: Reflections upon Methuselah, Ichthyphallos, Wheels and Dionysos" had a playful swipe at Lawrence's "dark blood, brooding" asking: "Why not just bloody humanity; or, perhaps, even bright-blooded super-humanity?" before conceding that "Lawrence's affirmation of the blood's reality is the most important gesture against anaemia being made in the modern world."<sup>43</sup> Stephensen's admiration for Lawrence was, therefore, ultimately undiminished. Lawrence, for his part, remained unimpressed with the journal, informing Charles Lahr that "the last *London Aphrodite* took the biscuit for silliness" (vii. 265). Lawrence told Stephensen: "Had your letter and *London Aphrodite* last week – No, I don't think I inspired you to a brilliant article – not even very estimable" (vii. 269).

Although clearly dismissive of the *London Aphrodite*, Lawrence continued to be interested in Stephensen's forthcoming bushwhackers project:

Do write your book about how the bush hits back. But don't forget to put a sketch 'The Bush in 1960'—and a concluding one: 'The Bush in 2500'.— And see who gives whom the death-blow. Whack-whack-whack! Do you know 'Low' the caricaturist who did the Evening Standard cartoon of Jix

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<sup>43</sup> *The London Aphrodite*, No. 5 April 1929, pp. 339, 341.

turning the authors out of hyde park? Quite amusing, but I demand my 'inspiration'. –What a slush-mush humanity. (vii. 199)

Lawrence hoped that Stephensen's bushwhackers would challenge convention and respectability and, in offering his own suggestions for sketches, was almost writing himself into Stephensen's project. There was, however, to be no meeting of minds, no further collaboration with an Australian. On 7 June 1929, Lawrence replied to a letter from Stephensen expressing relief that all was well with his *Paintings*, which Stephensen had by then completed. Stephensen must also have discussed a draft of *The Bushwhackers* in some detail in his letter and he appears to have outlined his intention to improve on Lawrence's portrayal of Australia in *Kangaroo*. Lawrence wrote:

I shall be interested to see your *Bushwhackers*. I am puzzled why you should feel you have to conquer or contradict something of me inside yourself. *Kangaroo* was only just what I felt. You may indeed know something much deeper and more vital about Australia and the Australian future. I should be the first to admit it. I should hate to think I ever said the last word, on anything. One says one's say, and leaves someone else to continue and improve on it. (vii. 322)

Lawrence's response to Stephensen is hard-edged, as well as positive, in the face of what must have been fairly presumptuous trumpeting by Stephensen in his letter to Lawrence. Significantly, Lawrence's reply also clearly implies that he stood by his pessimistic vision of Australia articulated in *Kangaroo*, expressed through Richard Somers, the Lawrence character:

Everything is outward—like hollow stalks of corn. The life makes this inevitable: all that struggle with bush and water and what-not, all the mad struggle with material necessities and conveniences—the inside soul just withers and goes into the outside, and they're all just lusty robust hollow stalks of people. (K, 131:18-22)

It is this pessimistic view of Australians which Stephensen sought to contradict. His *Bushwhackers* reveals that he wanted to replace Lawrence's hard-hitting condemnation of the Australian character with something more romantic. As a riposte to Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, *The Bushwhackers* failed, and English and Australian reviewers did not compare him with Lawrence. And the *Times Literary Supplement* and the Australian critic Nettie Palmer found that *The Bushwhackers* had not matched the quality of Henry Lawson's work.<sup>44</sup>

While Lawrence recognised that Stephensen was attempting to counter *Kangaroo*, he might also have pointed to the influence of *The Boy in the Bush* on Stephensen – it too has “bush” in its title. There is no evidence that Stephensen read this novel, but there are some interesting parallels which indicate that he may have. In the chapter “New Year's Eve” Lawrence portrays a humorous and rowdy woolshed dance. Easu, the villain of the novel, undermines the integrity of the evening's proceedings. In *The Bushwhackers* Stephensen presents a story “The Darncce” in a similarly comic vein and with a protagonist who subverts the evening in a mischievously humorous fashion, reminiscent of Easu. Stephensen, appears to have been at great pains to prove the authenticity of his depiction, giving, for example, an exhaustive list of “the old-time dances.”<sup>45</sup> Stephensen, however, fails to create a convincing bushwhacker hero capable of upsetting modern society. Jack Grant, is essentially, Lawrence's idea of a bushwhacker and is “like an enemy lurking outside the great Camp of civilisation” (*BB*, 231:10-11). Jack's repudiation of colonial society in Perth, and his hopes for a new start with two wives in the north-west of Western Australia, are Lawrence's “whack” at urban middle class society. Stephensen's characters, however, never rise above the sentimental and nationalistic. The stories are essentially a series of quirky yarns of a vanished bush life – a Chinamen is chased out of town in “Willy Ah Foo,” Indians practise a cremation three days before permission is granted by the local policemen in “Napoo Singh.” To Lawrence, these mild curiosities would have added little to what he had already enthusiastically gleaned from his own reading of the *Bulletin* years earlier, which he had reproduced in “Bits” in *Kangaroo*. Lawrence was straightforward in his comments to Stephensen. On 17 June 1929, Lawrence began a letter thanking Stephensen for *Paintings*, adding:

<sup>44</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* and Nettie Palmer quoted in Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> P. R. Stephensen, *The Bushwhackers: Sketches of Life in the Australian Outback* (London: The Mandrake Press, 1929), p. 77.

I read *Bush-Whackers*, and it's not 'childish', it's that it's too sketchy.  
 You won't be patient enough and go deep enough into your own scene.  
 You always stay at the level of the sketch because of the hurry. If you  
 went deeper you'd get a *real* book out of it. But you haven't the  
 submission. (vii. 337)

Like Mollie Skinner before him, Stephensen was not able to live up to the potential which Lawrence had tried to foster. Despite his disappointment, however, in July, Lawrence was "very tempted" to visit Stephensen in England, but could not face "*Dover* – and Victoria Station" (vii. 353). Lawrence was finished with England, and was bemused that Stephensen undertook a pilgrimage to his birthplace, Eastwood, and was "full of raptures" (vii. 460). He continued to encourage Stephensen's publishing ventures and advised him to be more selective with his "Mandrake list" (vii. 469). On 15 October Lawrence wrote his last letter to Stephensen, thanking him for a bundle of Mandrake books which Stephensen had sent to Bandol (vii. 531). On 31 October Stephensen informed Lawrence that he was taking a three month holiday, that he was tired of "murky London," but that he hoped "the Mandrake will put forth new shoots".<sup>46</sup> This caused concern for Lawrence, who hoped that The Mandrake Press would publish more of his work. By 7 November he was worried about Mandrake's capacity to publish his "Apocalypsis" (vii. 554-555), which eventually appeared posthumously as *Apocalypse* (vii. 555, n. 2). On 13 November 1929, Lawrence complained to Laurence Pollinger that he had "heard from Stephensen" but that there had been "no answer to *anything*" he had asked him, concluding that "it looks as if Stephensen had run away with himself" (vii. 564). On 25 November he told Pollinger, that "perhaps Mandrake is a withered root. Too bad!" and that "Stephensen writes no more" (vii. 573). Lawrence then began to try and extricate himself from The Mandrake Press. On 30 January 1930 he told Pollinger that he did not "wish to publish that *Jolly Roger* –extended essay with the Mandrake" because it was not yet ready (vii. 633). This was to become *A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"* (vii. 446 n. 1). Lawrence also came to distrust Stephensen's financial partner, Edward Goldston (vii. 644). On 20 February he lamented to Charles Lahr, who had himself been heavily involved with both *Pansies* and *Lady Chatterley's*

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<sup>46</sup> Stephensen quoted in Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, pp. 93-94.

*Lover*: “Oh that Mandrake – vegetable of ill omen!” (vii. 649). Lawrence was responding to the news that Mandrake had refused to allow him to withdraw from his contract for *A Propos*,<sup>47</sup> which Mandrake published posthumously on 24 June 1930 (vii. 446, n. 2).

Despite Stephensen’s shortcomings, Lawrence appears to have been fond of the energetic Australian to the last. There is more than a touch of disappointment in Lawrence’s complaint in November 1929 that Stephensen “writes no more.” By the end of 1930, after Lawrence’s death, Stephensen had left publishing, had been rescued financially by “a £600 legacy from a wealthy Australian woman,” and undertook some “moderately lucrative writing commissions.”<sup>48</sup> He began to move in more aristocratic circles, wrote a volume about “a master of hounds,” had “adapted easily to the formal English style of riding,” and had “turned his back on his radical beliefs.”<sup>49</sup> Stephensen had come to resemble the Australian expatriate minor aristocrat, Rico, whom Lawrence had so effectively satirised in *St Mawr*. We can imagine that the irony would not have been lost on Lawrence, had he lived on.

#### *Mimosa – Australian Wattle*

By early 1930 Lawrence’s health had declined drastically. At times he thought fondly of his former travels and the three countries which seem to have most inspired him, and disappointed him – England, America, and Australia. On 24 January he wrote to Mabel Dodge Luhan that he would like to come to New Mexico as soon as possible, that he might even approach from San Francisco, “like the first time” (vii. 629). From a sanatorium at Vence in France, he made peace with England, and wrote on 9 February to Charles Lahr: “If I am well I think I shall come to England this summer” (vii. 644). His attention also turned to Australia. On 12 February he reported to his old friend Achsah Brewster that he was happy with his new surroundings and that “there is a mimosa tree in blossom” (vii. 645). Lawrence had adored the many varieties of this plant he had seen in Australia. In August 1922 he had written to Frieda’s mother: “Yesterday we were with friends by motorcar on this ‘pass’, and the bush: wonderful. The flowers were coming out – beginning of spring. We found four kinds of mimosas” (iv. 281). Similarly, in *Kangaroo*,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Somers experiences the gorgeous displays of spring wattle, which he also knew as mimosa. The narrator reports:

The bush was in bloom, the wattles were out. Wattle, or mimosa, is the national flower of Australia. There are said to be thirty-two species. Richard found only seven as they wandered along. The little, pale sulphur wattle with a reddish stem sends its lovely sprays so aerial out of the sand of the trail, only a foot or two high, but such a delicate, spring-like thing. (K, 354:8-13)

When the Somerses return from this excursion, they feel that the plant is the embodiment of all the positive elements in Australia: “At home, with all the house full of blossom, but [sic] fluffy gold wattle bloom, they sat at tea in the pleasant room” (K, 356:6-7). Somers asks Harriett: “Do you wish you were staying?” (K, 356:10). “If I had three lives, I’d wish to stay” (K, 356:11-12), she replies, adding: “It’s the loveliest thing I’ve ever known” (K, 356:12). Somers agrees, wishing jocularly: “If only one could live a hundred years” (K, 356:13-14). And then, the narrator reports: “They were both silent. The flowers there in the room were like angel-presences, something out of heaven. The bush! The wonderful Australia” (K, 356:15-17).

With his letter to Brewster, Lawrence at Vence, in terrible health, was recalling Australia, and registering the spring-flowering mimosa as a beautiful symbol of regeneration. The mimosa celebrated that which had appealed most to Lawrence about Australia – its landscape, the bush. On the same day that he wrote to Brewster, Lawrence also wrote to Maria Huxley: “Well it all sounds very egoistic – that’s the worst of being sick. The mimosa is all out, in clouds – like Australia” (vii. 646). And Lawrence wrote a third letter on 12 February, to Mrs Morland, wife of the tuberculosis specialist who had examined him on 17 January 1930.<sup>50</sup> Again he wrote effusively of the mimosa flowering in the Australian spring:

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<sup>50</sup> Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: Life of an Outsider*, p.408.

I'm sorry spring makes you sad. I love it, if only I am well. Perhaps you would like Australia, where Spring is in August, and marvellous mimosa all along the wild brooks, in clouds, in August and September.<sup>51</sup>

A little over two weeks later, on 2 March 1930, Lawrence died. Frieda recalls: "We put flowers into his grave and all I said was: 'Good-bye Lorenzo,' and I put lots and lots of mimosa on his coffin,"<sup>52</sup> a fitting tribute recalling perhaps his most enduring vision of Australia.

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<sup>51</sup> James T. Boulton, "Further Letters of D. H. Lawrence," *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies* Vol. 1:1 2006, p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> Frieda Lawrence, "*Not I, But the Wind...*", p. 296.

I hope in this study to have shown the richness and diversity of Lawrence's engagement with Australia, and the importance of Australia in his works and in his life. Lawrence's "Australian period," beginning with *The Lost Girl*, and ending with *St. Mawr*, illustrates the broad shifts in Lawrence's attitudes to Australia. In his early works, Australia, epitomised by its "bush," figured as a strangely remote point of disappearance from the conventional world of Europe. Later, after the war, Lawrence came to see Australia as a site of great promise. After his visit, he was largely disappointed, although he never lost sight of its potential as a place of inspiration and regeneration. While at times his imaginings of the continent, his "dark gods" and "lords of death" are uniquely and obscurely Lawrentian, his visions and anxieties may also be seen as a response to broader discourses and concerns which occupied many modernist authors in the first decades of the twentieth century. Lawrence, perhaps more than any other author of his time attempted to articulate human relations and relationships in terms of their degenerative or regenerative characteristics. Modern industrial society in Australia at the edge of empire, like its counterparts in England and America, ultimately failed in Lawrentian terms. It was subject to an even greater number of degenerative forces than the old world. It failed as an environment where people might live creatively, simply and honestly, and it failed as a site for his *Rananim*. Nevertheless, Lawrence's evocations of Australian landscape, are amongst his most vivid and poetic representations of place. Above all Lawrence's Australia is multi-dimensional. Even at its most literal, in the autobiographical *Kangaroo*, we find an Australia richly imagined, and strangely unknowable. Ultimately, Lawrence's Australia is as much about Lawrence as it is about Australia. Like Somers in *Kangaroo*, at times Lawrence "wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia" (*K*, 28:19-20). Like Somers, he moved on, but Australia endured as both a disappointment and an ideal.



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